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THROUGH THE HEART OF AFGHANISTAN

By

Emil Trinkler

THROUGH THE HEART OF AFGHANISTAN

by

Emil Trinkler

edited and translated by

B. K. Featherstone

Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society
Author of 'An Unexplored Pass', etc.

With a map
and forty-four illustrations
from photographs by the Author

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

It was with great pleasure that I read Dr. Emil Trinkler's book *Quer durch Afghanistan nach Indien*, and I had no hesitation later in advising the publishers to translate this work into English. Modern literature on Afghanistan is somewhat scanty, for entrance to this country has until recently been difficult for Europeans. I therefore felt that a book describing the adventures of a journey across Afghanistan, graphically portrayed, well illustrated and yet totally devoid of exaggeration would prove a useful addition to the English bibliography of that country. The scientific results of the expedition have been omitted from this book by the author, but it is to be hoped that these will be translated at a later date.

This book covers a long period of travel and represents extracts from the author's diary which was written at the time. Dr. Trinkler has a great power of observing details, and his humorous methods of description make his book very pleasant reading. The success of the expedition was greatly due to his personality and his unceasing care for the welfare of his men. One striking point is

the fact that in spite of his nationality, he is full of admiration for the British in matters of colonization and dealing with natives. The reader may perhaps think that the narrative here and there is slightly disconnected, but this defect will be forgiven if one bears in mind that the author is giving his 'first impressions', which are always said to be the best.

A translator is always in an unenviable position and I would like to offer my excuses to the author and to the reader for any defects which may have crept in. An attempt has been made to give a literal translation, but owing to the difference between the English and German languages it has been necessary to give an idiomatic rendering in several places. Some difficulty has been experienced in translating the vivid descriptions of the scenery, sunsets and sunrises, and if they have not been reproduced faithfully, it is not the author's fault as he, in his own language, has drawn wonderful pictures.

The Permanent Committee on Geographical Names has not up to the time of writing specially dealt with names in Afghanistan. I am given to understand that the spelling to be adopted for Afghan names will be that of the *Survey of India* used in their 'List of Names of $\frac{1}{2M}$ Sheet Afghanistan', published in 1916. I have used their spelling throughout the book wherever possible, but a large number of the places could not be traced on any

of the maps available at the Royal Geographical Society. These I have spelt according to the system laid down in *A System for the Transliteration of Persian, Afghan and Arabian Words*, Second Edition, published by the General Staff, India, 1912.

I have made little change from the original edition in so far as the text is concerned. I have omitted a few photographs, some of which were not taken by the author, and likewise two coloured plates from water-colours made by the author. A map has been included, but several names have been omitted in order to show more clearly the author's route. In this connexion I am much indebted to Mr. E. C. Thomas, of Messrs. Edward Stanford, Ltd., for the valuable assistance and advice he has given me, and also for the personal supervision given to this work from the beginning. I have further added an Index and a Glossary of Native terms, which latter should help the general reader.

I should like to thank all those who have assisted me and in particular I am very grateful to my wife without whose help I should have had great difficulty in completing this translation.

B. K. FEATHERSTONE

22nd January, 1928.
London.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IN the heart of Asia, wedged in between Russia and India, lies the buffer state of Afghanistan. Up till quite recently this country was closed to Europeans, only an occasional doctor or engineer being admitted. We owe our detailed knowledge of Afghanistan largely to the chroniclers of the British-Afghan Wars of 1841–42 and 1878–79, and to a few intrepid pioneers who visited the Amir's dominions between 1825 and 1840. From the earliest times Afghanistan has been the scene of wars and upheavals, the passes to India crossing the Indo-Afghan frontier range. Alexander the Great, Timur, Mahmud of Ghazni, Baber, the first of the Great Moguls, and the Persian, Nadir Shah, all marched through Afghanistan to their campaigns in India. Afghanistan is a wild, mountainous country, in the Eastern part of which the peaks of the Hindu Kush rise to over 21,000 feet. Deep gullies pierce the mountains, and on the wide plateau not a speck of green is to be seen for days at a stretch. In summer, the sun beats mercilessly down on the rugged mountains ; in winter, they are wrapped in snow, and for

nearly six months the route through Central Afghanistan is completely closed to traffic. After the last Afghan War, the Amir Amanullah threw open his country to Europeans, and many Germans and Italians migrated there, entering the Government service as engineers, doctors, electricians, architects and teachers.

Even as a schoolboy, I was interested in the countries of Central Asia, and while a student at Munich University I had already studied them. Afghanistan, Chinese Turkestan, Tibet and India fascinated me. Then, in the summer of 1923, through the kind offices of a friend, an opportunity came my way of going to Afghanistan as geologist to a newly founded Afghan trading company. My journey took me through Russia, across Afghanistan, and home via India. I returned to Europe torn by care and strife, to scenes of ceaseless toil and bustle, where men's souls are starved by the commonplace routines of every day. Often in spirit I revisit the great, silent spaces, the solitary peaks and valleys of Afghanistan, and India's sunny plains and holy places. Once again I see my caravan crossing the lofty, snow-bound passes, and the nights round the camp fires. If I have succeeded, by the pen or by photographs, in enabling the reader to visualize these lands more fully, I am well content.

The present work is not concerned with the scientific results, which will be dealt with elsewhere. Consisting,

as it does, of collected diaries, sketches and photographs, it is merely intended to give a general idea of one traveller's impressions of the country and its inhabitants. All the photographs are my own, and I wish to thank the members of the German-Afghan Trading Company for their generous assistance in my enterprise.

EMIL TRINKLER

CHAPTER I

ACROSS RUSSIA AND RUSSIAN-TURKESTAN

At eleven o'clock on Friday evening, August 6th, I left Riga with my two friends, Wagner and Blaich. Our compartment was clean and apparently quite new, being fitted with electric light and comfortable, upholstered seats. The next morning, after breakfast, all the carriages were swept and cleaned, so that our first impressions of Russia were by no means unfavourable. We had been looking forward eagerly to our first glimpse of the Soviet Republic. The view from the train was monotonous, endless forests and fields, varied by solitary villages with low, thatched, wooden houses, and occasional broad meadows and swamps. About noon we passed through a massive wooden gateway flying the Red Flag with the Soviet emblems : a sickle, a hammer and a star. This was the frontier and we halted here for passport formalities. On either side were newly erected block houses, also flying the Red Flag, while sentries with fixed bayonets guarded the train, no one being allowed to alight. In due course we proceeded to Sebezh, where the luggage was examined. At one o'clock we continued our journey in pouring rain, under leaden

skies, which emphasized the dreariness of the surrounding woods and marshes. At the stations we were able to obtain food, such as white bread, sausage, fruit, cheese and milk. We saw typical Russian scenes : women and girls wearing coloured handkerchiefs on their heads, soldiers in different uniforms, and ragged beggars. We were also interested to see the inscription on the station buildings in large letters : ' Proletarians of All Countries, Unite ! ' During the afternoon the weather cleared and at sunset we came to a large town, its numerous white churches with green cupolas gleaming in the distance. On Sunday, punctually at five minutes to twelve, our train steamed into Moscow.

The conditions in Moscow have changed so much since 1923 that I will only briefly give my impressions of the Soviet capital. When we were there, two hotels were open ; we put up at the Knjajnuj Dwor, as the Savoy was full. Food in 1923 was good and plentiful, but beyond the means of the average Russian, for, even in peace time, Moscow was one of the most expensive cities in Europe. In the bazaars and markets we met many Eastern types : Turcomans, Chinamen, Armenians and Persians. Everyone, however, looked depressed and careworn, and I never heard a hearty laugh while we were there. All were wretchedly clad, but as we were likewise indifferently dressed, we did not feel conspicuous.

The five days' journey from Moscow to Tashkent was most pleasant, the train having an International Sleeping and Restaurant Car attached. It became warmer as we

approached Tashkent, until, during the last two days, the heat was almost unbearable. Never shall I forget crossing the Volga, the widest river in Europe. It was early morning ; the sunshine streamed over the vast woods and fields along the banks of the great river. Slowly the train pounded over the famous bridge which is about 1500 yards long. A few steamers and barges were drifting slowly downstream, while a Sabbath peace brooded over the landscape. Gradually the forests gave way to swamps interspersed with strips of green fields, until at length we reached the steppes, where, day and night, the same view of scorched and barren desert met the eye. We saw camels here for the first time and passed the caravans of the Kirghiz with their camp fires burning, while the sun, like a blood-red ball, sank in the evening sky. There were long halts at the stations, so that we were able to replenish our stock of fruit, fowls, bread, milk and eggs, but at fancy prices. At every station hot water was provided for making tea ; and, in addition, melons and water-melons, though expensive, were welcome thirst-quenchers. On the fourth day, the deep blue expanse of the Aral Sea appeared across the brown steppe. Not a speck of green was to be seen ; nothing but yellow grass and sand as far as the eye could reach. One evening we noticed a herd of camels feeding on the steppe and a caravan slowly travelling westwards. There was not a cloud in the blue sky, in fact months were to pass before we again sighted a cloud. At Kazalinsk a great fish market was in progress, and sturgeon and caviare were being

sold very cheaply. The days had passed all too quickly when, on the fifth day, at noon, we arrived at Tashkent.

It was still hot and we always welcomed the cool evenings. We used to sit in the garden of the Turkwojenkop Restaurant, drinking the local Turkestan red wine and listening to a gipsy band. As soon as dusk fell, the world came to life, rejoicing in the fresh cool air. The East was all around us, with its variegated bazaar life, its mud-walled gardens, the bright blue of its sky, and the brilliant sunshine. At every corner heavily laden Turcoman stalls displayed the most tempting fruit, grapes as large as plums, huge melons and water-melons ; while the Sarts, in their picturesque robes and multi-coloured, embroidered caps attracted the eye at every turn. During the midday heat the streets were deserted, the natives squatting on doorsteps, eating fruit, sleeping or dreaming. No one, who could avoid it, went out in the middle of the day as there was little shade in the poplar avenues. Dust permeated everything. The trees were grey with it and the town seemed permanently veiled in a thick cloud. Wagner and I often went for a walk in the evening. There was a full moon and the streets were bathed in its silver light, the church casting dark shadows across the large bazaar square. The houses were lit up until quite late, and the strains of a piano or guitar would float out into the night.

We succeeded at last in obtaining seats in the train from Tashkent to Samarkand, and, after despatching our luggage, resumed our rail journey. We arrived in Sam-

arkand on a beautiful moonlight night and drove into the town, which is some distance from the railway station. All was still and the air was fresh. We met a large camel caravan trailing slowly past in the dawn, and several Sarts riding small donkeys. The streets, bordered with poplars, were, like Tashkent, very dusty. Our driver drove at a reckless pace, so that we expected at any moment to find ourselves all landed in the ditch. The 'hotel', which consisted of only ten rooms, was of course full, but we were able to have a wash at basins set up in the court-yard. We ordered a *samovar*,* or an urn, made tea, and breakfasted in the open, and later went for a walk into the town. The proprietor of the hotel, who understood a little German, took us to see an Austrian Red Cross man, who had been interned as a prisoner of war, and had settled here.

In the east the clear azure sky gleamed over the city of Timur in the dazzling brightness of the sunshine, and as we entered the native quarter, the scene became even gayer. It was market day and the narrow, crowded streets were thick with dust which rose in clouds at every step. Europeans were few and far between, but everywhere were the Sarts in their brilliant raiment. Through the midst of this gaily-dressed throng camels came striding deliberately, while little donkeys tripped along, their riders clearing a path, and large, two-wheeled

* A *samovar* is an urn, usually of copper, for making tea after the Russian fashion. It is kept boiling by a tube filled with live charcoal passing through the centre. The word in Russia is generally taken to mean 'self-boiler', *samu*, self, and *bariti*, boil; but it is more likely an adaptation of a Tartar word, *Sanabar*, a tea-urn. (Translator's note.)

ox-wagons plodded past. Trafficking and bargaining were in full swing, hawkers offering caps, fruit, silks or gems for sale. At some of the stalls we were invited to partake of *kebab* or roast mutton, while lads, carrying big trays on their heads, plied us with freshly-baked bread cake, or grapes, and others, seated on the ground, sold fresh water from large earthenware jars. Passing the stands of the smiths, butchers and tailors, we came within sight of the world-famed buildings of Samarkand—the tomb of Tamerlane, and the Medressen, or stately colleges, erected by his grandson, Ulugh Begh, close to the Registan, the heart of ancient Samarkand. In the Tillah Kori—the gold covered—we were cordially received by the High Priest, a white-bearded patriarch in flowing robes with a large turban, who gave us permission to climb on to the roof of the old High School for a bird's-eye view of the town. An old Mohammedan, wearing a white turban, led us up the dilapidated steps ; we had to move warily on the roof, so insecure was the footing. We saw the landscape as through a cloud of dust. Time and again our eye was caught by the magnificent blue tiles, standing out against the yellow-ochre clay walls ; one minaret we noticed was crooked, and had to be supported by a wire cable. Below us was the native quarter, busy as an ant-heap, and we had a good view of the various tombs, but the heat on the roof soon grew so unbearable that we were glad to reach the courtyard once more.

We visited the grave of Timur, its blue dome soaring proudly among the tall poplars. A *mullah* or priest led

us through the dark entrance into the interior where the sarcophagus stands, made of one single nephrite crystal. The light was dim, a single shaft of sunlight penetrating through an opening in the wall, lighting up the floor and the marble grating which surrounded the sarcophagus. This is inscribed with the famous saying in Persian : 'If I were still alive, the world would tremble before me.' By the light of a candle, the *mullah* led us into a subterranean vault, containing various monuments and the actual burying place of Timur. Tamerlane was undoubtedly one of the greatest rulers of all time, and, with Jenghiz Khan, more than once terrorized all Asia. 'Even to-day we are constantly coming across their traces among the many ruins of Persia, Afghanistan and Turkestan. Despite the appalling atrocities of these rulers, we cannot but admire their encouragement of Art and Science, when we read that Timur imported architects from as far afield as Damascus to erect his magnificent buildings.

We were once the guests of a German, on one of those summer evenings which leave an ineffaceable impression upon one's mind. We sat in a large shady garden, surrounded by a high mud wall, while the moonlight played on the paths, throwing silver beams among the shadows. Here for the first time we tasted *pilau* or savoury rice, mutton and tomatoes, cucumbers and raisins, and enjoyed the good Turkestan wine. The party broke up about midnight, but for a long time we lay awake listening to the howling and baying of the wild dogs and jackals.

The next day we went on to Merv. We arrived early

at the station, as buying tickets in Russia is always a lengthy proceeding, and, after a hasty cup of coffee, sought our compartment. No sooner had we settled down than I discovered the loss of my pocket-book. I had had it in the waiting-room when I bought the tickets and paid for the coffee, so either it had been stolen, which was the most probable, or it had dropped out of my pocket when getting into the carriage. There were about fifty shillings in it, but what upset me much more was the loss of my passport and other important papers. There were a few minutes to spare before the train left, so I hurried to the station-master's office, and put the facts before him as briefly as possible. He referred me to the Station Controller of the *Cheka*, the Soviet Political Police, who gave me a pass. All this was done in great haste as the starting signal had already been given and we were just moving off. When I was in the train again, it occurred to me that our luggage checks were also in the pocket-book, but the worst was yet to come. Little by little I came to realize what a series of inconveniences and annoyances would follow from this unfortunate loss. The train was packed; people were lying on the floor and it was difficult to move about. The air was stifling and we could see the dust piling upon the seats as the train puffed and blew its way across the desert of the Kara-Kum. Sand dunes like fossilized waves followed each other as far as the eye could reach, and only at the small stations were there any signs of life, one or two red cottages, with a few children romping among the sheep and goats.

We arrived at Merv early in the morning and repaired to the 'hotel' Franzia, the door being opened by a youth after prolonged knocking. The house looked primitive ; not a window was whole, the chairs were battered and the rooms resembled prison cells. In the yard some grubby urchins were lying in bed, and the chambermaid had fixed her's beside a little puddle of grey-green dirty water. The 'porter', his frowsy head peering out from under a greasy coverlet, cursed us for disturbing his rest. It was strangely like a prison. And in this cheerless place we had to spend several days, waiting until we could move on to Kushk. Merv is notorious for its hot, unhealthy climate, and we were thankful when at length we were able to leave in a small train, which boasted but one passenger carriage.

We had been fortunate in meeting two Afghan couriers who were also going to Afghanistan and, thanks to their kindness, we received various privileges, including a reserved compartment. Dawn brought us to the edge of undulating steppes ; once I awoke in the night to see the black silhouettes of the hills against the starry sky. I had fallen asleep again, when suddenly the train stopped and we were told to get out. There were no signs of a station, no lights, no people ; all was darkness, so that we had to collect our belongings by the glimmer of a candle. The guard came and abused us heartily for being so slow and we could not imagine what had happened. The train could surely not have reached Kushk as we were the only passengers to alight. There was, however, no time for specula-

tion ; our luggage was simply hurled out of the window on to the embankment, and the train vanished into the night. It was bitterly cold and we were still half asleep and completely mystified, as, picking up our traps, we followed the Afghans to a small, white house standing in a garden surrounded by poplars. We entered a room illuminated by the pale flickering light of a solitary candle, and could just make out a few chairs and a bench. Ostanin, the Russian Frontier Commissioner, greeted us curtly, after which we lay down on the floor and were soon asleep.

CHAPTER II

HELD UP ON THE RUSSO-AFGHAN FRONTIER

LITTLE did I think that I should have to spend over seven weeks in this out-of-the-way spot in the Russian Empire when, in the grey dawn of September 2nd, I sighted the small peasant cottages of Kushk. We were just dressing when Ostanin, the Frontier Commissioner, to whose house we had been led, asked us for our passports, so that they could be placed before the Fort Commandant. I explained my loss to him and gave him the document which I had received in Merv from the Political Police. He read it through carefully, put it with the passports of my friends and sent off his secretary with the papers. We then sat down in the courtyard, which was surrounded by tall poplar trees, and breakfasted with the Commissioner's family. About noon, a soldier arrived, bringing the passports with an order forbidding us to cross the frontier as permission to proceed further had not been received from Tashkent. We at once sent off a telegram to the District Headquarters for the necessary authority and means, and this the soldier took with him. There was no answer by noon the next day, so Wagner decided to leave us, as he wanted to push on to the first

Afghan town, while Blaich stayed with me. Our heavy baggage was therefore loaded up on to a cart, and on top of this mound, Wagner and the two Afghan couriers seated themselves, and, accompanied by two mounted soldiers, the cart rolled down the dusty street that leads from Aleksejekva to the frontier river.

That afternoon Blaich and I went for a walk with the children of the Commissioner and his sister-in-law among the neighbouring hills which seemed very desolate. As far as the eye could see were ridge after ridge of weather-beaten hills of rubble and sand, a large smooth knoll stretching wave-like to the Russian-Afghan border. The plants were withered up and burnt almost to cinders, only the scanty tufts of camel's thorn still retained their olive green colour. The short dried grass was slippery, but, at all events, there were no steep precipices. Again and again one hill appeared behind another. It gave the children great pleasure to ramble about with us ; even the brown lamb, which belonged to the little girl had followed us of its own accord, and seemed to enjoy our playing, since it leaped and gambolled about. At last we reached the top of the ridge where we found a few isolated pistachio trees, whose nuts are similar to hazel nuts and are excellent to eat. It had become late ; the sun in golden splendour was sinking behind the hills, and blue shadows were creeping across the plain. We started off on our return journey in a northerly direction, but the way seemed endless. Olga began to cry, saying that she could not go any further ; Aleksej howled and wanted to be carried,

while even the little lamb stood still now and then and bleated. It was most disconcerting. Eventually we reached the final hill and saw the village again in the midst of the poplar trees. Thereupon our spirits rose and, joking and laughing, we entered the garden.

There was no answer the next day nor even the day after, in spite of the fact that we had sent a second reply-paid telegram. We had also been to the Fort Commandant, but could obtain no information, so Blaich decided to push on towards Afghanistan. I was now alone in Kushk, waiting and waiting for days and weeks. Every morning I awoke with the hope that the day would bring an answer from Tashkent, but no reply came. I spent the day out of doors as my room was far from comfortable. It was furnished with an upholstered bench, two chairs and a grand piano with no legs, resting on a wooden trestle, but which was so out of tune that it was impossible to play on it. Early every morning we had to board up the windows to keep out the burning heat and also to drive away the flies which always made for the darkened room. In spite of all these precautions, sleep was out of the question unless I buried myself beneath the thin sheet which I was fortunate enough to have with me, but this was of course most unpleasant. If only my heavy luggage had been with me I could easily have arranged matters, but I had nothing except a box in which there was a small stock of underclothing. Another hardship was the fact that there was nothing to read, except the Russian newspapers which were all too short. I therefore whiled

away the time by taking long walks around the neighbourhood.

In the morning at half-past eight we breakfasted in the courtyard. Madame Ostanin prepared the food herself and always gave us most excellent meals. After breakfast I wandered off among the hills. I once crossed the wide, flat basin of the plain and from here climbed the ridge which rose to the south-east, from whence there was a wonderful view of the surrounding country. I saw the summit on which Blaich and I and the children had picked the pistachio nuts, but there was one still higher to the south, from which I felt it must surely be possible to see more of the Afghan hills.

I was up very early one morning and about an hour's brisk walking along the main road to Chehil Ducktaran, brought me to the foot of the summit. The sun was already scorching, so I climbed a small hillock and lay down in the shade under some pistachio trees. Everything was so dazzling in the sunshine that I could scarcely keep my eyes open. There was not a living creature near me, though now and then the silence was broken by the cawing of a bird of prey, which slowly circled round the barren peaks. Behind me rose the particular summit which was my goal. On its north side the hill was deeply grooved, which surprised me, as usually all the hills round that part were rounded. When I at last gained the summit, I was able to confirm the idea that it was an extinct volcano. Everywhere the surface was covered with volcanic rocks, trachyte, tuffs and lumps of

lava ; I was able to acquire several specimens for my geological collection. The scenery was magnificent ; the hills as far as the Afghan mountains seemed to gleam in all colours of the rainbow, and I was sorry that I had neither my sketching materials nor my camera with me. To the north I could see as far as the Transcaspian steppes, while to the south were the high ranges of the Paropamisos, which were clothed in varying shades of heliotrope.

I remained here for some time, until at noon the heat became unbearable, the air shimmering over the hills. On a large rock basking in the sun was a small black and white snake, which scarcely stirred as I came up to it. I had noticed many of these snakes in the hills and found that when taken hold of, they always defended themselves vigorously. Beyond that there was little animal life to be seen. Everywhere the land was parched and life destroyed by the sun ; streams had been dried up and the bushes that grew by them scorched. I occasionally came across a dark red mallow growing in the deepest crevices. It was always a great joy to me to descend from this rocky wilderness to the basin of the Kushk river, where, like an oasis, Aleksejekva glittered in the sunlight.

Some time later I wandered about in the hills to the north-east, where the plain was wide and the river banks were wooded. I again ascended the hills surrounding the basin of the river and found the same desolate and barren picture. I followed a small dry stream bed in which I picked up some good specimens of fossils. After

climbing for two hours on those barren hills, I discovered a large melon field. The old Afghan, who was installed there as watchman, had certainly been through the wars, as he was blind in one eye and one of his knees was so stiff that he limped. He looked at me with great distrust, but when I told him that I was not a Russian and that I was not travelling to Afghanistan, he became friendliness itself and presented me with a few juicy water melons, which quenched my thirst. I have never, either in Afghanistan or in Turkestan, tasted such sweet melons, and I attribute this to the fact that the melon field was on the side of a hill which was in the sun the whole day long. The hillsides were often dotted black with herds of goats, mostly belonging to Afghans who were journeying with their animals into Russian territory. Seen from a distance, they resembled great black specks, slowly moving across the slopes, and it was only when I used my field glasses that I was able to distinguish the individual animals.

Frequently large caravans came from Herat, arriving generally at nightfall, and we could hear the echo of the caravan bells from over the hills a long time before they were visible. The Russian Custom-house was in front of my room and all the merchandise from Afghanistan was first brought there. It sometimes took hours before all the camels had been unloaded. The Custom-house would be full of merchandise and it gave the children great pleasure to jump from load to load. For a few days the camels were turned out to graze and we often saw them wandering about on the hillsides ; in the evening they were

driven back and lay down in rows in the big square in front of the Custom-house. They were Government caravans, numbering sometimes 250 to 300 camels each, bringing wool and skins from Afghanistan. They were escorted by Russian soldiers, as the Russian-Afghan frontier district is full of robbers. The caravan drivers, mostly worthy old white-bearded men, had to spend the night in my room, as there were only three rooms in the house. The Ostanins lived in one room ; in the second lived the proprietor, Simon, a thick-set peasant, with his invalid wife and five children, while the third was the guest room. Sleep was impossible with Afghans in the room, for at three o'clock in the morning they began to talk and to smoke their *huqqas* or water-pipes. On one occasion I had the doubtful pleasure of sleeping with a caravan driver whose deafening snores penetrated even to Ostanin, whose room was separated from ours by a corridor and two doors.

The camel drivers always breakfasted with us, until, one morning, I happened to hear a curious squeaking noise. When I asked Ostanin what it was, he said, with a wink towards the Afghans, '*Swinja*', meaning sucking pig. There is nothing more revolting to a Mohammedan than a pig, and to eat pork is the worst thing imaginable. The little pig was tied up in a sack and was lying against the wall of the courtyard. The Afghans heard the squeaking and furtively looked towards the sack in which the animal was moving about, being very uncertain as to what they ought to do. Simon then went to the door, took the pig

out of the sack and killed it in the yard in front of our eyes. The Afghans, without saying a word, got up and went away. Simon appeared to know nothing about pig-slaughtering and it was dreadful to see the animal still living eight minutes after its throat had been cut, until finally it was thrown into a tub of boiling water. At dinner, however, we thoroughly enjoyed our fried pork which had been prepared by Madame Ostanin in a delightful manner. In the middle of our meal one of the caravan leaders crossed the courtyard, passing our table. Never will I forget the contemptuous look that he gave us as he noticed the roast pork on the table. The disgust of a Mohammedan for pork is inherent, in the same way that we dislike a rat or a snake. One cannot offer a worse insult to a Mohammedan than to call him a 'pig'. After this episode all the Afghans withdrew from us; they no longer drank tea or passed round their *huqqa*.

At midday we could seldom escape from the wasps, hornets and flies, and at meals had to use one hand to drive them away. I once tried to count how many of these tormentors disturbed us at our meals. There were generally from eight to ten big hornets, which had their nest under the roof, from ten to twenty wasps and from fifty to sixty flies. We managed, however, to get a certain amount of amusement even out of these pests. When we sat still they did nothing to us and this gave us an opportunity of studying their movements and ways undisturbed. Very often we would see a wasp attack a fly which was just nibbling at some food. It would seize the

fly, but without stinging it, and fly off with it to its nest. Many wasps had a knack of catching flies in mid-air. The hornets did not seem to associate either with the wasps or the flies ; if, however, we killed a hornet, all the others would at once hurl themselves on to him and tear him to pieces. In spite of the fact that we daily had to battle with these pests, not one of us was ever stung. Only once, when we were all at table, did small Aleksej come up howling, with a very crushed look about him. A face so swollen and disfigured I have never seen. He had at least five or six stings, and his eyelids were so inflamed that he could scarcely see at all. He looked so funny that we could not help smiling, and old Ostanin shook with laughter and teased the boy, calling him '*Kitajes*', or small Chinaman. Aleksej howled the more when he was whipped and sent to bed with cold compresses. When Aleksej was punished, Olga also was taken to task for a past crime and given a lecture. In spite of this lesson, Aleksej, a few days later, again disturbed the wasps' nest and again found himself in this dreadful predicament.

It became more and more difficult to obtain provisions, for which we had to bargain. The peasants would sell nothing for Russian roubles, even when begged to do so, and the only currency which was of any use was Tsar gold roubles or the silver Afghan currency. There was still no answer from Tashkent, though I had forwarded another reply-paid telegram, and, receiving no answer, had sent a radio-telegram to the German Embassy in Moscow. I

waited and waited. In the meantime a new Frontier Commissioner was appointed. Ostanin having been transferred to Poltarazk (formerly Astrabad). Accommodation in the small house becoming quite impossible, I went to stay with the secretary, who had rented a large room in a peasant's cottage and had made it very comfortable. I was more at home here, especially as I was able to sleep in a proper bed, even though I could only wrap myself in a thin blanket. The secretary, a young, fair, thick-set man, was sympathetic ; he was well read, had studied Oriental languages, and gave me the run of his small library. He was often at home and worked a great deal for himself. In the evening we sat round the heavy wooden table by the light of a small petroleum lamp, listening to Russian fiction stories read aloud by the local lady teacher. During my week in Russia, my knowledge of the language had returned to me and it gave me great pleasure to be able to read without difficulty some of Tolstoi's novels. Sometimes the secretary went with me to the Ostanins' and we would sit far into the night in the garden. The small oil lamp only gave a dim light, but a bright one would have been out of place. Everything was quiet and subdued ; the silent mountains silhouetted against the clear sky and the long stems of the poplar trees towering to the starlit heavens. Sometimes from the village came the sad, sweet song of a Russian peasant girl. Even now I can hear the sound of bells and wish that I could put their notes on paper. Then peace would reign once more and the whole countryside would be wrapped in utter silence. Several times did I experience

these 'silent' nights during my wanderings through the Afghan hills or in the sultry plains of India. There is something sublime, almost fairylike, about the eternal silence which lies all over Asia. The stars seem to give a magic light and the countryside is so still, so undisturbed, that one forgets oneself, and one's thoughts turn to Europe, where life is one long hustle and man has no peace.

After four weeks, as there was still no answer, I decided to go myself to Tashkent, and I was fortunate in meeting two Afghan couriers who were travelling in the same direction. I packed my small box and left by train, the two Afghans being so attentive that I had to bother about nothing. We arrived at Merv about two o'clock in the morning, but the train did not go on to Tashkent until seven o'clock. We remained on the platform, because the couriers did not want to carry their heavy luggage to the Hotel Franzia and also the waiting-room was locked. It was a bitterly cold night and I was frozen, for I was wearing only a thin suit and my light overcoat. One of the Afghans lent me a rug and I used my box for a pillow. In spite of these discomforts I slept, but, about five o'clock, I woke up cold and stiff, and scarcely able to move. I walked up and down the platform for half an hour in order to get warm, and was very glad when the sun rose.

On my arrival in Samarkand, while walking up the station platform, two officers from the *Cheka* came up and inquired if I were Trinkler. It appeared that in the meantime word had been received in Kushk from Moscow

that I could proceed on my journey to Afghanistan. I now had to choose between staying in Samarkand or going on to Tashkent until the train for Merv started, which only runs every three days. I finally decided to go on to Tashkent as I had one or two important commissions to do there. There was no accommodation when I arrived there, the Hotel Regina being full. I therefore took up my abode at the Afghan Legation, where I was courteously treated. Little did I think then that I should again see the Consul fourteen days later, and what a mine of trouble and discomfort I should have been spared if I had let him make me out a fresh passport.

I arrived back again in Kushk after three days and three nights in the train. At last the hour of freedom had arrived, and for the last time, as I thought, I lunched there. Simon saddled two brown horses and, at about five o'clock, we finally left. It had been a beautiful day and later, when the sun sank behind the hills, riding became pleasant. I now welcomed the mountains which at one time had taunted me, while every tree and bush, every rock had filled me with sadness. We came to a plain and turned in a southerly direction. Slowly the shadows crept over the hillsides, while the plain was bathed in a deep blue light and the stars began to twinkle. The path was so sandy that the horses sank in deeply, and we often had to cross small ravine-like gaps. It was pitch dark when at length we reached the Russian frontier post. The authorities had not expected such a late call, and for a long time we had to shout until the barbed wire fence was

opened and our papers were examined. A Russian soldier then accompanied us to the first Afghan frontier post on the other side. We rode to the river's edge and forded it diagonally and then tried to find our way through a series of marshes. The night was black and one could with difficulty see where the horses were stepping. Carefully, step by step, we worked our way through this swampy region, until we reached a few miserable mud huts built by Afghans—Chehil Ducktaran, literally the forty daughters. We knocked at a house and called for some time before anyone appeared. We were hungry and thirsty and longing for somewhere to spend the night. At last the dogs began to bark and finally a few sleepy figures arrived, only to tell us that we could not stay there, but must push on to Kara-Tappeh, the black mountain. Once again we were forced to mount, while an Afghan soldier accompanied us on our way.

The clouds had now parted and, although there was no moon, the night was light, as thousands of stars were shining. On our left were low dome-shaped black hill slopes, and on our right the river bed. We rode on in silence through the cool of the night, so tired that now and again we dozed, and everything was like a dream. I seemed to see in the half-light a caravan of horses on a never-ending road, but this proved an optical illusion. Before us out of the darkness loomed a four-cornered tower, an Afghan outpost, where we were challenged and asked whence we had come and whither we were going. We rode on for another hour, a dark hill standing out ahead of us

against the horizon, until at length, at half-past one in the morning, the Afghan fort appeared before us. The dogs barked loudly as we knocked at the fort gate and demanded entrance. Even here we had to wait a long time before anyone came. It was bitterly cold so we wrapped ourselves in our coats and stamped up and down on the frozen ground. Finally we were admitted, but they would give us nothing to eat and we had to lie on the stone floor, wrapped in our thin blankets and coats. We were up early next morning and were given a meal of tea and bread, while I was promised a horse and a soldier as escort. Then appeared the unhappy-looking interpreter, whom I had already met in Kushk, who asked me for my passport. I reminded him that he knew that my passport had been stolen and that the Governor of Herat was expecting me. He went off to the Commandant and reported it, but the Commandant did not allow himself to be persuaded. He knew nothing about the circumstances of the case as he had only recently been transferred there, and was hostile and arrogant. I asked him to telephone to the Governor, as there is telephonic communication between Herat and the Afghan frontier posts. He replied that the telephone was not working. I then wanted to send a telegram to the Afghan Consul in Tashkent, but he reiterated that telegrams did not exist in so far as he was concerned. He said that he must have a proper *visa* and stamped photographs. It was most annoying, but I gradually became used to such things. One soon learns to have patience in Asia. There was, therefore, nothing to be done but to return to Tashkent

at once. I thought over in my mind the possibility of going straight on to Herat, but that would have been of no use. I did not know the way, I had no map, no horse and my money was running short. An Afghan soldier was watching me and Simon also had an eye on me so it would have been quite hopeless. I was not, however, looking forward to the journey of some seven hundred miles back to Tashkent, or to the wranglings on the Russian train, which were even worse than those one meets with on a caravan journey in Central Asia. What a prospect, to have to go back again to Merv and spend another night in Tashkent with the Afghan Consul!

There was, however, no help for it; it had to be done, though two full days must elapse in Aleksejekva before I could start for Tashkent. Once again I arrived late at night at Merv. I was about to lie down on a bench in the waiting-room when I recognised an Afghan merchant to whom I had often spoken in Kushk, who suggested that I should go with him to the Hotel Franzia. It was pitch dark in the streets and I was left in wonder as to how my guide found the way. A young girl opened the door and showed us to one of the gloomy rooms containing wooden benches, a few broken chairs, a small table on which flickered a candle. It must have been about one o'clock in the morning. We drank a bottle of strong sweet wine, and then the Afghan and the young girl vanished, leaving me alone. I was dead tired and in taking off my boots, I knocked against the table with the result that the candle fell over and went out. I had no matches, so I closed the door and

window and went to sleep. I was awakened in the night by a peculiar noise, and I felt certain that someone was in the room. I got up and crept quietly first to the door and then to the window. Both were locked. I looked round the room, but could see nothing, so I lay down again on the bench and tried to sleep. For a long time it was quiet and I was just dropping off when I heard the same noise, as though someone was turning over the pages of a parchment book. I listened carefully ; once I thought the noise was coming from the direction of the table and then again as though it were coming from the door. It could only be an animal of some kind. Early in the morning I investigated the noise, and learned what it had been. The evening before the Afghan had dropped the paper in which the bottle of wine had been wrapped on the floor in front of the door. A beetle, which had been wandering round the room trying to escape, had attempted to squeeze under the door. He naturally had come into contact with the paper which his small prickly legs had scratched, thus producing the queer noise which I had been unable to trace and which had given me a sleepless night. I caught the little 'disturber of the peace', and now have it as a souvenir of a restless night in Merv, having put him where he forms part of my entomological collection.

The scenery in Turkestan had changed since my last visit ; it was now autumn and all the bright tints had disappeared. Many of the trees had already shed their leaves, though some were still in autumn dress. The clear blue sky had given place to angry clouds which were collect-

ing over the hills in the east, and already snow had fallen. I arrived in Tashkent on October 16th to find it bitterly cold with an icy wind blowing. When I went to call on the Afghan Consul, I found him sitting huddled in a thick coat. He was as usual very obliging and promised to do everything he could for me. My train was not going till a few days later, so I visited several museums, also the Botanical and Zoological Gardens. There were already many signs of autumn in the streets, and loose leaves were whirled through the air by the wind. It became dark early and I could not work without a light at six o'clock. The Afghan Consul prepared a large sealed document for me ; I was photographed in the bazaar for a few rupees and these photographs were pasted on the passport. I then returned once more to Kushk.

In Aleksejekva I hired a wagon ; I had bought a rug in Tashkent and had picked up my handbag at the Afghan frontier post where Wagner had left it for me. It was now truly autumn ; there was no warmth in the sun, the sky was overcast and the grey clouds were sailing over the hills before the wind. We careered madly up and down the hillsides. Simon tried to take a short cut, but the ground proved so rough that the cart nearly upset, while the axles creaked and groaned. Towards six o'clock, as dusk was falling, we came to the Russian town of Chehil Ducktaran. The passport difficulties were soon over, after which we drove across the river. On the Afghan side we learned again that we should again have to go to Kara-Tappeh. I made myself as comfortable as I could

in the cart and we continued the journey by moonlight. I was very tired and it was not long before I was sound asleep in spite of the rattling of the cart, and I only half heard Simon saying '*prischli*', meaning we had arrived. We had the same room in the fort as before, but managed to obtain something to eat in spite of the lateness of the hour. We were also given a night-light, which, however, burned down quickly. Simon was soon fast asleep, but I lay awake for a long time, while my mind went over the events of the last few weeks, since I had left my friends. A great Power guides us on our way ; the Hand of God leads us through life and we must trust Him and have confidence and faith that everything is for the best even though at the time matters prove not to our liking.

I fell asleep at last, but was awakened suddenly to see in the moonlight a black cat devouring our evening meal. During his efforts he had knocked the candle over, but his green eyes sparkled in the dark and now and then he rustled the paper in which the food had been wrapped. Except for this and Simon's loud snores, there was silence. We were up early the next morning ; we showed our Afghan passports and this time everything was in order. Bread and tea were brought, the people being most obliging, placing a horse and a soldier-escort at my disposal. Having tipped Simon well, who was returning back to Kushk, I took leave of him, while I, with my small caravan, pushed on towards new adventures.

CHAPTER III

ACROSS THE FRONTIER RANGE OF AFGHANISTAN

THE first day's march in the direction of Afghanistan was short as the weather was very bad. We rode back as far as Chehil Ducktaran, which we entered towards noon. I was able to make myself understood with the Afghans in Persian, though now and again a Russian word would creep in. I made myself as comfortable as possible in a room which was rather like a prisoner's cell, the windows being barred and long cobwebs hanging from the ceiling. Very little light could penetrate through the narrow openings and even less entered through the grimy, completely dust-smothered windows. Chehil Ducktaran is a notoriously malaria-ridden spot, being surrounded by swamps. Even in my cell there were many mosquitoes, and as my camp bed and mosquito net were with my heavy baggage in Herat, I was unable to protect myself from these tiresome and dangerous malarial pests. As soon as I began to feel drowsy, a soft, low, buzzing noise would sound in my ear, so that I spent a restless night and was much relieved when morning came.

The weather next day was disappointing. At first it looked as though it would clear up, but, at nine o'clock,

rain came on again. There was little to be seen of the hills as the peaks were enveloped in grey clouds. Everything was sodden, rain dripping even from the manes of the horses, and, after a three hours' ride, we were drenched to the skin. In addition it was bitterly cold and the soldiers muttered, '*Chunuk, chunuk,*' meaning, 'Cold, cold.' Soon we came to a broad plain, where a few small villages were dotted about, the inhabitants of which seemed curious as to who we were and where we were going. I saw little sign of animal life except once on a large rock I noticed an adder which did not even stir as we rode by. The next day I mounted the black horse which, until then, had carried my luggage. He went better than the brown, but was thoroughly lazy, so that I had constantly to use the whip. Abdullah, the groom, wrapped in blankets, was perched in a throne-like manner on the pack-horse, swinging pendulum fashion on the top of the baggage, and I had a strong suspicion that he frequently indulged in a little nap. Hour after hour passed and there was not a soul to be seen anywhere, while the downpour continued steadily. We passed a few wretched mud-huts, but the only sign of life was the neighing of a solitary donkey. At last we sighted a few tall trees, the first big *caravanserai*, or halting place for caravans, of Chodchah Molal. We were the only guests here and were shown every consideration. These *caravanserais* have been built by the Government on a four-sided ground plan round a central yard for animals with very often a small building erected in the middle which serves as a mosque. The few

rooms, which are used for sleeping quarters, are not big and have only a small door giving on to the courtyard, with a hole in the ceiling through which the smoke escapes. As soon as we had arrived the room in which we were to sleep was swept out, but the dust only rose in clouds. A bright fire was lit and tea was made, and after we had arranged to have our clothes dried and had made a meal of chicken and rice, we felt somewhat revived.

We rose early the next morning, after a good night's rest. The weather was still bad ; it was raining in sheets and was even colder and more windy than the day before. I put on many extra clothes, but in spite of this I could not keep warm. The groom had again wrapped himself in his dirty felt blankets, but the soldier had our deepest sympathy as he had not even got a coat. The horses looked miserable, and in half an hour everything was thoroughly wet again. The tops of the hills were shrouded in thick black clouds, and the whole scene was desolate and depressing in the extreme. We rode slowly towards the Ardewan pass, a gap sunk deep in the range which lay stretched out before us. Frequently we had to cross small streams which wound their way among the barren hills. while occasionally a solitary crow circled round us. By eleven o'clock we had reached a high altitude and large flakes of snow had begun to fall. We all rode leaning forward over our saddles in utter silence ; and thus an hour passed. In many places the black surface of the ground was already covered with a thick layer of

snow. We gradually worked our way up the pass which has an altitude of about 4800 feet. The descent on the south was fairly steep and the horses were so unsteady on the slippery, flat slates that we had to dismount and lead them. Frozen to the marrow, and very wet, we at last arrived at Kush *robat*, or rest-house, where we were able to obtain a cup of hot tea and warm ourselves by a fire. We pushed on, crossing yet another small ridge, till darkness crept over the great wide plain, which seemed endless. We met large herds of goats and once a camel caravan slowly passed us. It was twilight when we entered the wretched village of Parwana. The mountains to the south were lit up by the setting sun and seemed to quiver in a golden haze, though the sky was overcast with thick black clouds. At the *caravanserai*, an appalling 'hole' was placed at our disposal, and it was so late that not even a *pilau* could be prepared. After a meal of fried eggs swimming in mutton fat, bread and tea, we retired to bed and tried to sleep.

When we started off the next day on a short march, there was still a thick mist hanging about, but very soon the rays of the sun slowly filtered through the clouds, which quickly disappeared. We climbed a small hill which brought us out on to a wide plateau, where it was so hot that I took off my coat. The sun put new life into us, and both the groom and the soldier began to talk. In the fertile Hari Rud plain we enjoyed mild summer conditions. We passed big, dome-shaped graves and slender minarets, both covered with blue glazed tiles, and

saw before us the walls of the town of Herat and the citadel. Before long the soldier had discovered where my baggage was stored, and I was led into a charming little summer-house. In the middle of the inner courtyard was a pond full of goldfish, over which drooped a large mulberry tree. The windows were of coloured glass, and the sun streamed into the room. Everything seemed bathed in light and sun while cool breezes played around us. What a contrast to the last few days ! Tea and fruit were brought to me and later Dad Khan Sahib appeared on behalf of the Governor to inform me that I must move into the Chahar-Bagh quarters which belong to the Government buildings. Here I was given a large, beautiful room which looked out over the wonderful flower beds which decorated the courtyard. The scent was overwhelming ; large butter-flies with heavy silken wings flitted from flower to flower, and the bees were busy at their work. After seeing to my heavy luggage and arranging my room, I went out with Dad Khan Sahib for a walk through the town.

CHAPTER IV

A DREAM CITY

WHEN I think of Herat, I see sunny streets, old ruins, big orchards and flower gardens ; once again I hear the voice of the *muezzin*, or Mohammedan crier calling the people to prayer from the blue cupolas of the minarets. I see the little courtyard surrounded by high mud walls with its pond of goldfish, and can almost feel the heat of the autumn sun, the last relic of a Herat summer. Such an air of complete peace lies over the town that it influences every human being ; had the same effect on myself. A feeling that, after endless difficulties and worries, I was at last nearing my goal, which enabled me, quite understandably, to breathe and enjoy the quiet that my care-free days in Herat brought me. I realized, when I was dwelling in the East proper, that the Mohammedan world with all its fascination and beauty belongs to one of the real religions. I found it hard to leave Herat after spending fourteen days there. I felt as though I were bidding farewell to a beautiful woman whom I had just met and whom I would have liked to have known better ; one whom I would possibly

never see again, one whom I would always associate with happiness and of whom I could dream for hours.

When I was strolling through the narrow bazaar streets, which were just as uneven as in olden times when Alexander the Great made Herat a strategic point on his journey to India ; when I saw the vivid picture of the town and watched the people, with indescribable peace and dignity, moving about their work which did not seem to matter, but which could be done either to-morrow or the day after or even the following week, I realized that time had changed nothing. As of old, the caravans slowly passed to the ringing of a bell, the camels stepping proudly through the streets ; while the camel-drivers themselves sang the same old folksongs. On everything shone the sun, bright and sparkling, while the clear blue sky quivered over the yellow clay and brick buildings, from the walls of which the heat rebounded to be caught in narrow alleys. It was very sultry in the middle of the day, with not a breath of wind, while the air seemed to shimmer and dance on the hot roofs. In the shade of a poplar sat a beggar with a long white beard, hunched up by old age, holding out an alms bowl ; under the trees Afghans were sleeping and shopkeepers dozed by their stalls. One could even believe that it was the city of Sleeping Beauty. Now, after two years in the daily routine of life in one of Europe's largest cities, during the hectic hours of troubled, grey days, my thoughts wander back to Asia and especially to the old magic town on the Hari Rud, where no European has disturbed the natives. He who has once experienced true peace will never again thirst for war.

One afternoon the *mudir*, or secretary, took me for a long walk to some old ruins in the north of the town which I had noticed on my first arrival. The big mosque, the Mosalla, must have been wonderful, with its minaret which, though in ruins, still bore traces of magnificent ornamental tiles. The colours were a deep Prussian blue, a brilliant though somewhat paler blue-green, ochre and dark green, but all so carefully blended together that they left one with the impression of a magnificent piece of harmony. White flowering creepers were intertwined in the dark blue, mingled with golden blossoms, while the whole was surrounded by green garlands, one with a white inscription on the deep blue background. Sometimes there would be no definite pattern but perhaps single, large, white buds on a dark blue background. Blue predominated, and seemed to throw the ochre-yellow and green even more effectively into relief. The great white marble tombs were indeed fine with their curious inscriptions carved upon them.

The building of this mosque is said to have been begun in the year 1192 by Ghyaz Eddin and finished by his son, Mahmud, in 1212. It was, however, partially destroyed by Jenghiz Kahn, and rebuilt by the Sultan Hussein Mirza, whom, with Shah Rukh, Herat has to thank for its finest buildings. There is another theory that the Mosalla was built by the wife of the Shah Rukh. In the centre of the minaret, enclosed by a low wall, is the ruined black marble tomb in which the Sultan Hussein Mirza lies buried. Wonderful flower patterns have been

carved in the black marble, and I have never seen anything to equal it even in India. The mosque was supposed to have been famous originally because it contained the remains of the holy Imam Risa from Meshed. The big cupola which made the mosque the finest in all Asia was destroyed in 1885 for military reasons. Even so I found pieces of yellow earthen vessels inlaid with real gold and black which shone like mother-of-pearl. The magnificence of these buildings must have been indescribable. Near by was another cupola, the grave of the Emperor Timuriden, which was practically destroyed, being very cracked, and many of the beautiful blue tiles had fallen off or been stolen. In the interior of the building were a few white marble tombs, some of which were nearly buried in the dust; while further north there was yet another cupola ornamented with blue. Small children were playing round the base, their laughter echoing through the still building.

I was so fascinated that the following day I went again, and sitting down on the edge of a tomb close to one of the minarets, tried to make a water-colour sketch of the beautiful tile patterns. There was not a soul within sight. The sun was sinking in the west; brighter and brighter became the picture, the ochre bricks turning a yellow-gold against which the blue shone, making a most wonderful colour scheme. A deep peace lay over the town, which seemed dead, as if I and my servant were the only inhabitants. It grew darker and darker, black shadows falling and enveloping the whole town and plain.

Of all the old ruins which show the mightiness and greatness of Herat, the Ark, the citadel, still survives as a great landmark. It is built of baked bricks and rises with its mighty walls and bulwarks on a ridge which has risen in the course of time out of the ruins of the ancient buildings. Whether it will be possible to establish the date when the first foundations were laid is doubtful. That they date back to the time of Alexander the Great is not altogether out of the question. Historians call the whole district in which Herat lies, Aria, and the towns of Aria, Metropolis and Artocoana. One can infer from the position of the town that Herat had been colonized from the earliest times, as two large highways intersect here, one from north to south and the other from east to west. The plain is very fertile ; numbers of irrigation canals water the countryside and turn the otherwise arid soil into wonderful flower gardens and fruit orchards where grapes, melons, apples, pears, apricots, peaches and mulberries flourish. Large white poppies sway in the wind, cotton and tobacco are planted and lucerne can be cut eight times a year.

I was much satisfied with my house which I had managed to make quite comfortable. The view from my window over the courtyard was beautiful ; I tried one afternoon to take a coloured photograph of the flowers, but unfortunately the plates had been damaged. There was a small lake in the midst of this brilliant scene, and sometimes the Afghans, dressed in gay garments, sat on the stone steps leading down to the water. My servants were kind-hearted and friendly and did everything they

could to help me. I developed all my photographs of Herat, helped by one of them who was thus greatly amused.

One day, a Friday and therefore the Mohammedan Sabbath, I was alone in my house with the servant, as the Wazir had gone shooting with all his staff. It was, in fact, one of those days when the quiet and peace of nature overwhelms us, when we are happy in the true sense of the word and wish for nothing save that this harmony may continue. It was a glorious November day, almost like midsummer in the sun. In the morning the Governor left to the sound of trumpets and the beating of drums ; but as the shooting party withdrew, the noise faded away, eventually dying altogether. I sat in the garden, reading, writing letters and making new prints of the photographs which I wanted to send home. I also chattered with the servant in order to improve my Persian ; in Europe one never learns anything of a foreign language that is of any use abroad, whether it be English or French. More stress and importance should be laid in schools on the value of conversation. The learning of a language has always come easily to me. When visiting a foreign country, either as a scientist or a geographer, one should, without fail, thoroughly master the native tongue, as one cannot understand the character of the people without knowing the language. I have always felt this and when, during my schooldays, I thought that I might one day go to Asia, I took out a Persian grammar from the local library and eagerly studied the language. I neglected

French, which I had never liked, with the result that my knowledge of this language was invariably bad.

Towards evening I went up with the *mudir* on to the roof of the Palace to see the sunset. We had a view of the whole town with its mud walls and towers, its ruins and ramparts which rose up in the midst of the gardens. As the sun was sinking behind the hills, we heard the distant sound of trumpets, heralding the return of the shooting party. There was a beautiful view of the mosque, the two minarets with their blue cupolas shining in the evening sunlight. I had an opportunity one day of going over this mosque when the sun was at its highest. There was a holiday-like stillness around it; in fact, it was so quiet that it seemed like a dream city which had been asleep for a thousand years. The lake in the mosque courtyard was still; a big blue-green pine rested its top on the high walls, the patterned tiles of which gleamed in varying colours, while the two minarets stood like sentinels guarding the holy place. This mosque is said to be one of the oldest buildings in Herat.

When one sees the ruins, one realizes what a varied history Herat must have had; several times the town has been razed to the ground. The annals relate that a certain Jenghiz Khan invaded the town with 80,000 cavalry and massacred, it is said, 1,600,000 inhabitants. Only forty people, who had managed to hide themselves, survived. The part, which is now surrounded by the town ramparts, in earlier times was only a fort, as Herat was then much bigger. The population also during the

last century, after the Persian wars, has greatly decreased. In 1838 it was estimated at 70,000, after the wars 7000–8000, and in 1845 from 20,000 to 22,000, which is probably about the number at the present time. Whether the figures given in the time before the invasion of Jenghiz Khan have been exaggerated is left undecided. It is interesting nevertheless to compare these figures with those given by an English officer, Arthur Connolly, who visited Herat in 1830 :—

	A.D 1219	A.D. 1830
Shops . .	12,000	1,200
Open baths .	6,000	20
Schools . .	350	6
Houses . .	144,000	4,000

Herat is, however, about the same to-day as it was in the time of Shah Rucks and Sultan Hussein Mirza, 1469–1506. Baber, the first great Indian Mogul, visited Herat and gives an account in his memoirs of all the objects of interest. He appears to have enjoyed his stay as the descriptions of the festivities and drinking bouts belong to the most amusing parts.

I spent my time in Herat in buying provisions for our journey, in hiring horses and engaging servants. Sahib Dad Khan helped me and we soon collected a number of useful articles, such as rice, sugar, tea, candles, fat, onions, also a coffee-pot, tea-pot, candlesticks, matches and cigarettes. The servant I engaged was called Juma, whom the reader will know better as we travel on, also my

caravan leader, Gul Mahommed. During my stay, I also called on the Governor to whom I was introduced by his secretary, Latif Khan, and Sahib Dad Khan. The audience was short but most entertaining ; the Governor was friendly, inquiring after my plans and was pleased that I could speak Persian. He gave me tea and promised every assistance on my journey. Wagner had told him that I should probably arrive in Herat without means and be compelled to borrow from him. Consequently when I put my request to him, it did not come as a surprise, and he immediately expressed his willingness to help me. I therefore borrowed 400 rupees, about £26, which I repaid to the Treasury in Kabul. Gradually the time for my departure from Herat drew near, and when the young Afghan teacher, Gulam Ali, who was to accompany me as far as Kabul, had completed his preparations, we started on our journey across Central Afghanistan.

CHAPTER V

THROUGH CENTRAL AFGHANISTAN

I LEFT Herat at half-past twelve on November 6th, 1923. Dad Khan Sahib accompanied me to the gateway where I met Gulam Ali, the pack-animals, in charge of Gul Mahommed, having gone on ahead. I mounted my brown horse, wished Dad Khan Sahib the best of luck and trotted off along the narrow angular lanes leading out of the town. The horses were fresh, as they had had no exercise for some time, and we had trouble in holding them. At the outskirts of the town about ten to fifteen young Afghans, friends of Gulam Ali, were waiting, according to Afghan custom, to accompany us on our way. We rode along a wide street on either side of which were big gardens, overshadowed by the grey mud houses. The most wonderful grapes, melons, walnuts, mulberries and apricots were growing, which are renowned far afield. Mesjidi Khan, the servant of Gulam Ali, had bought a gun in the bazaar, an old French model, of which he was very proud. This was the only weapon in the party, except my revolver. Whilst we were saying goodbye to the young Afghans, a salute was fired with it which made the horses even more restive, and we finally departed.

We travelled on throughout the day until about four o'clock in the afternoon through picturesque country. On our left the bare rugged mountains spread fan-shaped down to the plain, while on our right there were green gardens and cultivated areas surrounding the town of Hari Rud. We reached the first *caravanserai* about five o'clock and turned in early that night. We were all up the next day before daybreak while it was still pitch dark. The stars were twinkling in the skies and the crescent of the moon hovered behind the hills. It was bitterly cold and I thrust my hands quickly into my pockets. The first hours of the morning dragged on slowly ; no one wanted to make conversation, and it was not till the sun came out that any of us showed signs of life. We were travelling in an easterly direction towards the high mountains which were facing us, and were therefore riding towards the rising sun. Suddenly the darkness turned to a bright gold, and it was only a question of a few minutes before the rays of the sun streamed over the countryside. While I was in Afghanistan I realized why people worship the sun, for never before have I longed for the sun as I did on my caravan journeys in Afghanistan. Frozen and indifferent to everything, one sat on one's horse during the night marches, having only the one wish that the sun should rise.

There was little change of scene on our way ; on all sides were the bare hills covered with disintegrated rocks, without a sign of green vegetation. Occasionally in the plains we saw small settlements, surrounded by gardens,

like oases in the desert. We passed the little village of Tunian where we did not see a soul. The place had a magic look with its small lake in which tall pine trees were reflected. We encountered a few caravans consisting of camels and donkeys, which brought life to this quiet dreamy scene. The air was particularly clear so that I was continually deceived over distances. Sometimes for hours we would see a village in the distance, expecting to reach it any minute. One day we saw high snowy peaks of the Safed Koh on the south-east horizon, but the next day we seemed to be no nearer to them. We arrived one afternoon at the Marwa *robat* about three o'clock where we halted for the night.

It was pitch dark on November 8th when we rose. Juma was up first, lit the fire and made tea. While we had breakfast Gul Mahommed loaded up the horses, which was done by the light of a fire in the courtyard. In the early days the loading up of the animals was naturally accompanied by a great deal of noise and swearing. The loads were often unevenly balanced, so that they slipped off, or the girths would be loose, or one of the ponies would start while only half laden ; another one would kick, while a third would simply throw off its pack. To cut a long story short, it meant a great deal of trouble before we were finally straight. We started off from Marwa that morning at half-past six. My brown pony had by now become quite amenable ; I could, without bothering, drop the reins and allow the animal to find its way. This was especially pleasing in the early

hours of the morning, as then I could keep my hands in my pockets. The sunrise was glorious, the mountains resplendent in varied tints from golden brown to violet. Again and again I was filled with wonder at this display of colour, which was surely unique. The moment the sun came out it became warm ; the sky turned a deep blue against which the hills rose sharply. We noticed a large bird of prey on a hill by the way and Mesjidi Khan boasted that he would shoot him with his new gun. Like a cat he stealthily approached his victim and fired ; dust sprang up a yard below the bird which flew gracefully away in the direction of the hills opposite us.

We passed several small mud villages lying in deep ravines off our route. About nine o'clock a cold east wind sprang up so that one could scarcely feel the warmth of the sun, but at noon, when we reached the basin of the Obeh, it had again became very hot. In these larger villages we were able to make some purchases. There is a small river which runs through the town which is really picturesque ; there are also large shady trees which afford shelter to the mud houses and stalls. Gulam Ali paid a visit to his friend, the schoolmaster of the village ; a small mud house with a slate roof was the school. As usual in Afghanistan we were invited to tea and I therefore had to photograph the nine children, who seemed to be quite intelligent.

We had intended to start early as our next stage was a long one, but as things turned out, however, we were not under way until six o'clock. Getting up proved

always a difficult problem, and if it had not been for Mesjidi Khan we should have often overslept ourselves. It was very pleasant that morning, for there was not a cloud in the blue sky. The thermometer would often register 3 degrees centigrade in the morning, and at midday 30 degrees. Further there was no wind, which was generally strong, blowing clouds of dust into our faces. Snow lay on the high hills to the south and I thought of sunny spring days in our own Alps, and only the gold of the trembling leaves reminded me that it was autumn. Everywhere small mountain torrents rushed down to the Hari Rud. In the distance a peasant was ploughing his fields and shouting at his oxen. There were times when we had to leave the river which cut its way by deep ravines through the hills. In places there were terraces above the river, and high above its present level on the hillsides I found rounded boulders, showing that the water had once flowed at a much higher level, but in the course of time had cut its way deep into the rocks. At some places we were able to step across the ravines, but the animals and drivers had to take a roundabout way. Juma was most talkative that day ; he was proud of being allowed to carry my field glasses. The imperturbable Gul Mahommed sang his Pushtu songs the whole day long, which my Afghan escort did not seem to understand but nevertheless tried to join in the chorus. At any rate they seemed to enjoy singing their songs ; I took no part with them but was glad that their spirits were so high.

We were as usual late in getting under way on November 10th, everything going wrong. At last Gul Mahommed set off with the pack animals and Gulam Ali and I followed. We caught up the others about ten minutes later and suddenly discovered that there was trouble at the rest house. We found that our servant, a Persian, and his son who had joined us, were missing. We waited for a while and then rode back again only to find an argument in progress. In the midst of a crowd of people who were fighting I noticed Juma, who seemed to have the most to say and whose turban had been knocked off. The Persian was making use of his riding-whip and several of the combatants were already cut in the face and were bleeding. It was altogether a dreadful affair. The quarrel was due to the fact that the Persian who had purchased a chicken from the caretaker overnight would not pay, thinking that he had been overcharged. The matter did not really concern us ; but the fanatical Afghans have a habit of getting mixed up in every quarrel, and I had great difficulty in extricating Juma. There were cuts from whips and bloody faces ; the caretaker came running up to me and swore by Allah that he was in the right, while our Persian travelling companion kept on shouting, '*Durud migujad, durud migujad,*' meaning, 'He is lying,' and at the same time lashing him again with the whip. As the combatants could not agree among themselves, and as the affair had nothing to do with us, we departed with our servant, leaving the Persian to his fate. An hour later, however, he rejoined us.

The first stretch of that day's march was in the Hari Rud plain. The landscape was, however, hilly and the river had often cut its way deep into the rocks, and the blue-green water was beautifully clear. Now and then there were small passes to cross which sometimes were so steep that we were forced to dismount and lead our horses. The reddish-brown soil was loose, as the rocks were very disintegrated. It was generally windy on the summits of the passes ; one pulled one's cap over one's ears and put on a pair of goggles as a protection against the dust. My snow glasses that I had often used in the Alps I found useful as they saved me from the glare of the sun. The wind was so strong that we all had to tie on our caps to prevent them from being blown off. At half-past eleven it became warmer and about midday it was so hot that we were perspiring. The daily variations in temperature at these altitudes are great ; at night the thermometer would fall to — 20 degrees centigrade, and at midday rise to 30 degrees. We continued to ascend, and we had climbed some 1800 feet since leaving Herat. Slowly our caravan pushed on in an easterly direction, the weather as usual being perfect with not a cloud in the vast expanse of blue. Small yellow butterflies, rather like hay butterflies, fluttered around us. On both sides of us we again had the barren hills, but far away in the east we could see high snowy peaks crystal-like against the blue sky.

I made myself comfortable on my brown pony which had at last got used to me ; he went slowly and carefully step by step so that I could make my notes as I went along.

We crossed the Hari Rud about an hour later, in order to turn south, and we were not to see the river again for four days. According to the latest British maps (India and Adjacent Countries : Sheet 33, 29 Calcutta, 1916) we were at the spot where the 64th longitude crosses the Hari Rud. The map here is inaccurate, as it is for the area through which we passed the following day. Except for the German expedition, which, during the War, passed here on its way to Kabul, no European I believe has been along this stretch. The Hari Rud was very shallow and hardly came up to the horses' knees. We caught a glimpse, towards the east, of the big valley from which the river came, and then turned into a small plain, going in a south-easterly direction ; while in front of us rose the main chain of the Safed Koh, which we had to cross. Here and there we saw snow-capped peaks ; wild-looking perpendicular rocks rose on either side of us and I found it difficult to make observations and collect specimens of stones at the same time. The sun burned fiercely in these rocky places ; it was very sultry and the heat on the rocks was so great that we were badly sunburnt before we reached, about three o'clock, the *robat* in Charsar, which lies at an altitude of approximately 5400 feet.

Night after night there was the same scene. Setting up our camp for the night had become a quick business, as the servants now knew where all the luggage had to go. Juma, in course of time, had learned how to put up my camp bed so that it no longer collapsed when I lay down.

He had likewise learned to put my box in a place where I could get at it, as at first I could never find it, it having been put underneath everything else. While dinner was being prepared I worked, noting up records, working out the meteorological observations, labelling and packing away the geological specimens and writing up my diary. After dinner a few Afghans paid us a visit in our 'room' and sang to us. One of them was a splendid, powerful lad with clean-cut, handsome features; but one could distinguish at once the Mongolian strain in the others. They sang to us alternately for about an hour, and one of them imitated with great skill the noises of animals.

The following morning we rose early and put on warm clothes. The Afghans had wrapped their turbans round their heads so that one could only see their nose and eyes. It was still very fresh and the small streams were completely frozen. In order to keep warm we walked instead of riding till the sun appeared. Our way lay up a gradual slope and we soon had a beautiful view of the snowy mountains which we had sighted yesterday, to the south-east. We collected some dried branches, piled them up and lit a fire at which we warmed our hands and feet. We slowly ascended a pass which is approximately 6900 feet high, going alternately up and down hill; one is always glad to reach the summit of a pass as this means going down the other side. Juma pointed in a south-easterly direction to a chain of mountains and said, '*Kutel, kutel*,' meaning 'Pass,' which later we had to cross. Like a snake our caravan wound its way on, till presently we

all dismounted to give the animals a rest. I would have liked to take a photograph, but the mountain scenery was so desolate that I spared the film. The ground was strewn with bare, splintered rocks on which grew only small dried-up desert plants, but the colours of the hills were wonderful ; rarely have I seen anything to equal them. Here there was a rock one mass of red and yellow, and there, one of deep violet and green. From a pass approximately 8490 feet high, there was a most glorious view ; in the south rose a chain of snow-capped mountains, whose higher peaks stood out like teeth against the deep blue skies. I would have liked to go there, to the heart of the Hazara Highlands, our knowledge of which is small. There is only one European who has had a glimpse of this wilderness, the Frenchman, Ferrier ; but much of his report is inaccurate and his records are vague. We pushed on across these barren hills, following a river which wound its way like a blue ribbon far below us ; owing to the extraordinary clearness of the air, everything seemed much closer. We then went down into a deep valley, which gave its name to our next halting place, Tang-i-Azao (the valley of Azao). Dark red, rocky walls rose on either side, allowing us to see only a small patch of blue sky, while on a projecting rock stood an old mud ruin. The country looked dead, and it could not be more cheerless even by moonlight.

On November 12th we started off at four o'clock in the morning while it was still so dark that it necessitated lighting lamps. At the head of the party Mesjidi Khan

marched, his flickering lantern acting as a guide to the caravan. Gradually we wound our way up the high pass, which lay immediately behind Tang-i-Azao. The British map was of no use to us as Tang-i-Azao was not marked on it. We crossed a mountain torrent which was racing in a southerly direction, and managed to reach the other bank safely, though Juma slipped while jumping from stone to stone and took a cold morning bath in front of us all. The change in the atmosphere became very noticeable as we climbed, and every few minutes the horses had to rest in order to get their breath. It was just beginning to be light as we reached the summit of the pass, but we continued further on foot in order to keep warm. Gradually the sky in the east began to turn pink, while the country became more defined ; a golden glow marked the place where the sun was rising, and soon its rays poured over the silent mountains. A group of rocks caught by the first rays of the sun turned a fiery red, whilst below us the dark shadows of early morning still lay over the plains. We reached a wide, long valley, along which we journeyed for the greater part of that day. There were again weather-beaten rocks on our left and right, with now and then a glimpse of still higher, snow-capped mountains in the south and north. We met not a soul, so quiet, barren and deserted was the district.

It was customary at eleven o'clock for Juma to divide up the breakfast which we were carrying on our saddles. We generally had some bread, cold mutton or chicken and a few dried apricots which were very good. At twelve

o'clock we passed some ruins in the walls of which crows were living. We then travelled for hours over hilly country, till, at three o'clock, we saw from a high point the *robat* of Godar-i-Pam in a plain. Red undulating hills stood out against the blue sky and I made a small water-colour of the countryside. We bought a lamb for four rupees, about five shillings, which was slaughtered in the evening, with which Juma prepared a good mutton ragout. No sooner had the sun gone down behind the mountains than it became bitterly cold ; we therefore lit a large fire in our hut which warmed us beautifully.

I give extracts from my diary for the next days which read as follows : November 13th : We spent a most uncomfortable night. I slept about a couple of hours till I was awakened by a noise. The Afghans seemed to be sound asleep. The night before by the camp fire stories of robbers had been told, and the general opinion had been that this was not a safe part. I distinctly heard someone rattling the crockery, and wanted to light up, but as usual there were no matches. I called to Juma, who was sound asleep in a corner, and he at length awoke, lit a candle and looked round the room, but found nothing. The lantern had been upset and the pots and pans were lying about, but we could find nothing else. Possibly a big tom-cat had got in to eat the remains of our evening meal. In nearly every *caravanserai* a few cats live which are extremely importunate, and if one hits them they only become more of a nuisance.

We were very cold when we got up at six o'clock, with

the thermometer registering 10 degrees below zero. The day's march was short and very monotonous. We went along a big, terraced plain, the ground covered with frost and the snow-crystals shining like diamonds. Our path still lay in a northerly direction. Ahead of us was a range of mountains which we would cross on the following day by a high pass; there was only a little snow on the rocky peaks. About noon we met a big caravan coming from Hesares. We had seen clouds of dust in the distance, and my Afghans were showing signs of anxiety, as they feared that they were robbers. The Hazaras are good, law-making men, as opposed to the Firuzkuhis who inhabit the northern part of these mountains. I noticed at once the Mongol strain : sharp eyes, a small beard and prominent cheek bones, strongly resembling Tibetans. They are supposed to have come into the land with Jenghiz Khan but are now limited to Central Afghanistan. They possess large herds of sheep and goats, which are all their worldly goods, but they also do a certain amount of agricultural work. We later passed through a Hasara settlement which consisted of about twenty black, round tents like *yurts* or nomadic Mongolian dwellings.

We climbed higher and higher, coming nearer and nearer to the snow-line. Just outside the *robat* of Tere-Bulak (a wet well), I was able to make a collection of some fine stones. Here for the first time we saw some cumulus clouds, like sailing ships crossing the sky. In the afternoon I climbed a hill which rose just behind the rest house and collected a few more fossils. Gulam Ali and Mesjidi Khan

amused themselves by setting fire to some of the low shrubs that grew on the hillsides. The dry underwood burnt quickly, the white smoke curling round us in thick clouds. We went to bed early that night as the next day we had a stiff march before us.

November 14th : It was, however, six o'clock before we actually left. We had to cross another high pass, and as the gradient was easy we were soon able to mount our horses and ride slowly uphill. Stretched before us were the Band-i-Baian, which did not look very threatening and had only a little snow on the peaks. We gradually worked our way up and about nine o'clock reached the summit of a pass 9000 feet high. Juma had gone on ahead and with the dry shrubs that were growing on the mountain side had lit a large fire that warmed and thawed us.

We were now in the high regions of these mountains, and the higher we went up these northern slopes the more snow we met. From the highest point, the Kutel-i-Ahangaran, we had a glorious view. A winter scene confronted us ; far away in the north, like a sharp white line, the main chain of the Koh-i-Baba, and in the south a few high snowy peaks towered above the others. We were then in the midst of a snowfield, the crystals of which reflected the sun's rays on all sides. I was glad that I had my snow-glasses with me, as the new fallen snow in the morning sun was so dazzling that one could scarcely keep one's eyes open. I took two photographs, which give an idea of these barren snow-covered peaks. There

are no Alpine characteristics, no glaciers, and one rarely sees steep cliff precipices. The rocks are very disintegrated and are composed of black calcareous earth and slate. We rested on the summit of the second pass, lit a large fire and had breakfast. We then made a long descent, seeing in the distance the valley of the Hari Rud with its terraced slopes. About three o'clock we passed a settlement of Hazaras who live there in caves which they have cut out of the smooth rocks. There happened to be a spring-cleaning in progress, as on the hillsides were carpets and blankets spread out to dry. Two big, angry dogs, white mastiffs, did not want to let us pass, and we only saved ourselves from being attacked by throwing stones at them.

The Ahangaran basin is well cultivated, with numerous fields and mud houses, and with small ruins dotted about. We passed the *robat* and pushed on in a westerly direction to Kausi. We were once again in the valley of the Hari Rud which we had left between Obeh and Charsar. As regards the course of the river between Ahangaran and Obeh, the only information I could obtain was that it cuts its way by a deep ravine through the hills. We continued along the valley of the Hari Rud for about an hour. A flock of wild ducks circled above the river, and Mesjidi Khan wanted to try his luck again with a shot, but, as usual, he missed. To the south our way lay across the long, bare ridge of hills, the Band-i-Baian, to the left of the range which slopes down to the Hari Rud. Now and then we dismounted and walked. We crossed one or two

more hills before we came in sight of the *kale* or fort and the *robat of* Kausi, at four o'clock. Just before we arrived there I had a wonderful panorama : the mountains in the east were bathed in the rays of the setting sun and literally glowed in a fiery red and deep violet, which was a glorious sight against the dark evening sky. This, however, only lasted a few minutes ; it passed, like everything on this earth, but was unforgettable. These moments stimulate and revive us when, in troublous times, these scenes rise before our eyes, giving us renewed courage.

We spent a quiet day in Kausi, as Gulam Ali had a friend there whom he wished to visit. We also wanted to give the animals a rest. The village of Kausi lies on the north bank of the Hari Rud, which necessitated crossing the river. I was too tired to go into the village itself and so stayed in the *caravanserai*. Just as I was settling down comfortably on my bed, about to write up my diary, a servant brought me an invitation from Gulam Ali's friend who was the tax collector of the district. He had also brought a horse so that I could ride through the river. I mounted the bare-backed animal and allowed myself to be led down to the river. It was already dark ; the servant was holding the stable-lamp in one hand and in the other the reins of the horse. When we came to the middle of the river with the water dashing by and splashing, the horse suddenly became restive, so that with difficulty I remained seated. At length, however, we reached the other bank in safety. We were well received by the young Afghans, who gave us *pilau* and *mast*, or sour milk,

also tea and cakes, with music and singing to entertain us. About half-past eight I left, but Gulam Ali and Mesjidi Khan spent the night with their friend.

November 15th : This was a day of real rest, and we were able to sleep late. We breakfasted at eight o'clock, and I celebrated the holiday by making cocoa, as we were able to get milk. I gave the Afghans some, and as I had made the cocoa very strong, they kept on saying, '*Bisjar-talch*', meaning, 'Very sour'. It was always difficult for them to pronounce the word, and I was much amused at Juma who, when looking for the cocoa tin, used to say, '*Kau-kau kuja'st ?*' or 'Where is the *kau-kau ?*' We spent the morning repacking the trunks, the contents of which had been upset. I went to Gulam Ali's friend for lunch and we again had *pilau*, tea and some sweet cakes. Everyone wore his gala clothes, and I did not feel at all suitably dressed in my riding clothes. In the afternoon we wandered round the neighbouring hills. The rocks were in process of decomposition and the green-stones, like the other volcanic stones, had become dust, so that there were only a few hard rocks visible out of the rubble forming little ridges. A hard seam of black volcanic stones ran down to the river causing rapids. In the distance we were able to distinguish several well-defined terraces, which showed that the river at one time must have flowed on a higher level.

We decided to call on the *Hakim*, the Assistant Governor. My escort, before we reached Kausi, had told me wonderful stories of him, and said that he was a 'mad old buffer,' who,

however, had great influence. As I was travelling without any introductions or even a passport, a visit seemed rather unsafe as, if he, according to the Afghans, acted like a mad bureaucrat, and asked for my papers, I would be in an awkward position. In the afternoon while photographing my comrades and their friends on a terrace, a crowd collected on a small bank on the opposite side from us, watching us closely. The *Hakim* would certainly receive a report about what we were doing, so we decided therefore that the best thing to do was to call on him first. He lived in a wretched, half-ruined *kalé* or fort. As we approached it, the inhabitants collected round us and did not appear to feel very friendly disposed. I involuntarily thought of the situation which Sir Francis Younghusband found himself in, when he went to search the forts of the Kunjati in the Kara-Korams. We went along black alleys and filthy, dirty courtyards, till we at last reached one that was somewhat cleaner. Here some *kelims* or rugs were spread out for us. We waited some time, while my Afghans told me a few more jokes about the *Hakim*, till eventually the despot arrived. He turned out to be a wizened little man with the look of a rogue written on his face, and I had little doubt in my mind that he could be very cruel. We were asked to tea, and I had to show him my field-glasses, but otherwise there was little conversation. My Afghans seemed to have such respect for him that they hardly dared open their mouths. We stayed for a short while and then went back to the river, where I collected a few more geological specimens and took a photograph of the party.

November 16th : We had intended going to Daolat Yar, but hearing that it would be a long march we determined to go only as far as Badgah. The friend of Gulam Ali accompanied us part of the way, wearing his best suit and riding a powerful black stallion. He held his lambskin cap in his right hand in order to protect his eyes from the sun, which amused Juma very much. We continually ascended the terraces, which follow the course of the river. At Pusaleh we passed the great bridge across the Hari Rud ; the village itself seemed to be deserted. A little way outside Pusaleh the way leaves the river, which here flows in rapids with small waterfalls and pouring out of a deep ravine. On our right were the Baian mountains with their bare, rounded ridges—an inhospitable region. About noon we again came to the Hari Rud valley shut in by high, bare, rocky mountains. A few dried-up shrubs near the river were the only signs of vegetation. How often do I find the entry in my diary : Never saw a spot of green the whole day !

The first European who visited Badgah was Arthur Connolly, about 1831, on his way from Kabul to Khiva, much trouble befalling him *en route*. Badgah lies in a great plain which is swept by winds from all sides, hence the name *bad*, wind, and *gah*, place.

In the evening in the *robat* we wearied of the same scene. When Juma piled up the dried shrubs in the fireplace and lit them, the room became filled with smoke that choked us. We wept copiously and even our smoked-glasses were not adequate ; there remained nothing to be done

but to lie flat down on the ground near the fire. At a height of two feet from the ground was a layer of thick smoke ; it was only when the room was sufficiently warmed and we had covered up the chimney-hole that the smoke cleared. I wrote up my diary by the light of the fire. Now and then we put on some dried shrubs which crackled and threw out sparks, and we would sit for hours round the glowing fire, gazing at the shooting flames. Pictures of past memories would spring up, such as a bonfire on Easter Eve. The Afghans used to sit still and remain dumb, while Gulam Ali read a Persian story book. He was generally quite engrossed in his book ; now and then he would rouse himself to recite to Mesjidi Khan a particularly beautiful poem. Outside, in front of the door of our hut, another fire was shining. Gul Mahommed was cooking the rice pudding there, while Juma sat by the fire, dreaming. The water in our small, black, sooty kettle began to hum and about nine o'clock our meal was ready. The rice was brought in on a big dish with meat around it. I helped my food on to a plate ; the Afghans, however, all grabbed for it from the big dish, each thrusting his hand into the rice, trying to snatch the biggest piece of meat. Forks and knives they did not know. Gul Mahommed ate as much as two people and I often wondered where he stowed it all. He appeared quite respectable in his thick, felt-like coat and his black turban in comparison with the other people. To-day, to finish up with, he drank all the melted mutton fat that was left over, at which Juma remarked that he ate like a

cow. Gul Mahommed was so angry at this that for the next few days he did not speak to Juma. Gul Mahommed was, as a matter of fact, very vain, for he often, on our journeys gazed at himself in a small looking-glass. He had an interesting set of little instruments attached on a ring : a nail file, a spoon for ear-cleaning and some pincers with which he pulled the hairs out of his beard !

November 17th : This was really the most monotonous day of all. At first we pushed up the valley of the Hari Rud ; we then left the river and rode for hours through the barren rocks. About noon we saw the river flowing far below us and ascended gradually from its bank. We had a glorious view to the north of the snowy peaks of the Koh-i-Baba. Passing through Shinia we came to Daolat Yar, a settlement which lies in a big plain. A large number of important caravan routes intersect here, one of which is said to follow the banks of the Farah Rud as far as Sistan.

Some scholars hold the theory that Alexander the Great came via the Hilmend plain with his army on his way to Bamian. Quintus Curtius, however, describes a route which presents greater difficulties than the regular route from Kandahar, through Kabul, to Bamian. Ferrier crossed the Hari Rud a little to the north-east of Daolat Yar ; he then turned south to the Hazara Highlands. The British officers, Talbot and Maitland, have also been in this neighbourhood, but their reports are, however, not accessible to me. Later, in Kabul, I learnt that the

German doctors who had passed along this route a few months before had lost one of their party—Berends —who died of malaria and was buried in this wilderness of mountains.

CHAPTER VI

OVER SNOW-BOUND PASSES

On November 18th we had to rise at two p'clock in the morning, and I was still very drowsy when tea was brought to me half an hour later. We set off at half-past three, our caravan moving slowly into the darkness of the night. I rode at first, but my feet soon became so cold that I dismounted and walked. Slowly the long hours passed. It was a wonderful night ; rarely have I seen so many shooting stars which lit up the sky every few minutes like rockets. We worked our way up to the summit of the pass which lay in front of us, and at length were able to distinguish some landmarks as it grew lighter. The hills were veiled in a peculiar shade of violet, which turned blue as the light grew. We entered the picturesque basin of the Germ-ab, a Hazara settlement, as the first rays of the morning sun were striking the hill-tops. The inhabitants were working hard, ploughing the fields and threshing the corn. The men were singing at their work, while the women sat in front of the *yurt*-like huts playing with the children, while they sewed or knitted. It was an ideally peaceful picture, reminding me of the description, which Ferrier gives, of a Hazara

settlement on the edge of a lake in Central Afghanistan. Sheep and goats were grazing in the plain, while a few powerful dogs kept watch over the village.

We continued on our way and the small settlement was soon out of sight. We crossed another pass from which we had an interesting view. Below us to our left lay an undulating brick-red mountain world, forming a sharp contrast with the blue sky. On our right, however, were high peaks which stood out against the dark volcanic rocks, some of which were covered with snow. It was warm in the sun, and was one of the last beautiful autumn days of the year. About three o'clock we came to a broad, but shallow, river, in whose still waters the hills were reflected, and on the opposite bank lay a large village. While crossing the river my horse slipped and we both took a bath in the cold water. I finished the remainder of the way to Lar on foot, while Mesjidi Khan, who had sprained his foot, lagged behind. An hour later we sighted the rest house which was built on a terrace, below which the river wound its way. As the sun sank in the west, the red hilly country to the north of the river became even more fantastic. Darkness descended very quickly, the sky turning black in the north-east, foreshadowing a thunderstorm, while the hills shimmered in their golden and violet tints.

November 19th: Gulam Ali and Mesjidi Khan informed me in the evening that we should have to start early, at the latest by one o'clock. As the Afghans can tell the time, but have no watch themselves, I put my

watch back two hours, as I had no desire to lose two hours' sleep. When at about half-past one Mesjidi Khan got up, lit the lantern and was about to begin packing, I told him he was mad, that it was only half-past eleven and under no circumstances was I going to start. Thereupon I buried myself again in my fur, turned over on my side and went to sleep. Mesjidi Khan mumbled something, blew out the light and crept back again to bed with Gulam Ali, who was snoring hard.

It was about five o'clock when we were eventually underway. The sky was overcast and it looked like snow, the snow-covered mountains silhouetted against the leaden sky. One would almost have thought that this depressing countryside was endeavouring to harmonize with our gravity, for our morning ride passed very heavily. I made, while riding, a sketch of the mountains which lay to our right where there were some fine alluvial terraces. We again had to cross a pass, where one of the pack-ponies shied at the skeleton of a camel that was lying by the wayside. We frequently came across the remains of animals ; some of the skeletons had been bleached by the sun, on others there were still skin and hair, showing that the animals could only have died recently. We also found remains of skeletons off the beaten track, where they had been dragged by wolves, and the courtyards of some of the *caravanserais*, in which lay the bones of animals, were a depressing sight.

We lit a big fire on the summit of the pass and rested for a quarter of an hour while I made a rough sketch of

one or two of the high snowy peaks which rose in the south. The hillsides were composed of dark red sandstones, really tufaceous, similar to what we had seen in the Teng-i-Azan. We then rode into the plain of Kirman which is desolate and deserted. The nearer we came to these parts the colder it grew ; a piercing wind was driving against us and everyone put on as many clothes as possible. It began to snow hard and soon the ground was quite white. We passed some ruins in the walls of which some crows had built their nests and who rent the air with their cries. A few mounted men, with guns over their shoulders, rode up to us and asked us where we were going. They did not recognize me as a European, as I was wearing my snow-glasses and my face was muffled up and for weeks I had not shaved. The cold became more intense, the wind more piercing, till we became nearly frozen to death.

At eleven o'clock Juma shared out our breakfast. I had the breast and leg of a chicken, but the meat was frozen and so interlarded with icicles that it scrunched as I bit it. Mist and clouds enveloped the high snowy mountains towards which we were riding. It became darker and darker and again there was the prospect of snow. I could scarcely do any sketching my hand was so cold. We met a group of nomads, some riding small donkeys and ponies, some on foot, who must have been frozen in their dirty, ragged clothes. A camel caravan was approaching slowly, the animals looking as though they had been powdered. A young woman

crouching on one of the camels, looked furtively at us as though curious to know who we were. Children were tied on to others and looked anxiously down from their rocking seats. Such is the nomad's life. In spite of it all they seemed to be satisfied with their lot, as they have never known other conditions.

There appeared to be a road here leading to Bamian which was not marked on the latest English maps, but was marked on the older ones. It led over a pass, called the Talatu, which Ferrier probably crossed. About five o'clock we started the ascent of the Sharak-Kushta pass. We were all on foot and pleased that it had stopped snowing. Mesjidi Khan went on far ahead ; he climbed like a cat, the rarefication of the air making no difference to him. We, however, had to rest every few minutes in order to regain our breath, while the poor animals could only advance slowly. Gul Mahommed was a long way behind as one of the horses was unable to go any further. How much suffering those rocks must have witnessed ; in one day alone I counted eight skeletons of camels and horses while crossing the pass. We had come to an infinite world of mountains. At length we reached the highest point, from which we made a steep descent into a sheltered valley where we lit a fire to warm ourselves till Gul Mahommed arrived with the pack animals. This pass is the water-shed between the Hari Rud and Hilmend, which flows into the lake of Hamun at Sistan.

We next tackled the second high pass, the Kutel-i-Akserat, and step by step worked our way upwards.

The mountains around us were magnificent, and in every direction were snowy ranges. From the summit of the pass which has a height of approximately 10,000 feet, we enjoyed an extensive view of the Afghan Highlands, the rocks again being of dark red sandstone. We were surrounded by a sea of high peaks, and I was kept busy taking bearings and photographing them all. There was still a third pass before us, and then we descended to the Akserat tableland, when a never-ending march ensued before we reached the rest house.

About six o'clock in the evening it began to snow in big flakes and when we rose the next morning the landscape had a true winter aspect. My escort had no very great desire to start off in this weather, but as it was only snowing slightly and the sky was clearing, I saw no reason to delay. Juma and Gul Mahommed slowly loaded up the pack animals and about eight o'clock we left Akserat. It was cold and the snow crunched under the hoofs of the horses; hills and plains all lay under a white mantle. We halted at a small stream, which was covered with a thin sheet of ice, to water the animals. The weather was gradually clearing and soon bright sunshine poured over the wonderful winter landscape. The snow glittered like diamonds so that one was almost blinded without snow-glasses. Now and then we met some Hazaras who, in passing, called to us in a friendly manner, '*Salem alaikum, munda nàhaschi*,' meaning, 'Greetings to you, may you not grow tired!'

The mountains on the left were composed of fine schist,

but in spite of careful searching I could not find any fossilized stones. Gulam Ali and Mesjidi Khan rode off to a Hazara settlement in order to purchase some *kurk barek*, or cloth. This was a brown thickly woven material which was strong and warm, and out of which the Afghans make their winter garments. We had to cross another high pass, but this was easy, involving a descent into the valley of the Pănjao. From one of the precipices a large rock had fallen which was covered with fossilized stones ; but it was difficult to separate them from the rock. The road to Pănjao seemed endless ; we rode for hours in changeable weather through the valley with its terraced slopes. First the sun would shine and then would follow a hail storm. We passed many settlements and met Hazaras driving small black oxen overloaded with underwood. Before reaching the rest house we crossed the river which flows down from the Koh-i-Baba range and in its lower course is called the Tagao Pănjao (*tagao*, ravine). The rest house lies on high ground above the river, while on the other side is a mud stronghold. Again in this neighbourhood there were the dark red sandstones giving the country its characteristic colour, while the higher mountains were composed of black slate and dark limestone. There is said to be a hot spring in this neighbourhood, but we did not visit it.

Just before we came to the rest house we nearly lost our tea kettle, but fortunately it was found by Juma who was following behind. It was snowing as we arrived, but we managed to make ourselves comfortable. Whilst

Gul Mahommed was fetching wood and was about to draw water from the stream, he saw near the rest house a big wolf busy gnawing at the skeleton of a camel. He came running back to get Mesjidi Khan's gun ; when we went out into the yard the wolf had vánished, but we were able to pick out its tracks in the freshly fallen snow. One of the horses was in a pitiable condition ; it had grown very thin and had got sore from carrying loads. I went out again to see the animals where they stood huddled close together in the yard. Gul Mahommed was rubbing raw white of egg into the sore parts of the animal, taking great trouble, as he was very fond of this white horse. On the following day, as there was no improvement he tried a radical cure. He drew blood from the horse's nostrils, and strangely enough this worked wonders, so that when we reached Kabul the white horse was the most active of all.

The next day we set off at half-past seven. It had again snowed during the night, but although some had melted, the ground was still white. We were now riding in an easterly direction down a broad valley. In front of us rose a massive, high peak on whose steep crags the snow could find no hold. I made a small sketch, fixed the hill and we then worked our way round its slope, reaching the summit of a pass about ten o'clock, from which we had a glorious view. We had, however, to cross one more pass before we reached the Hilmend district. The ascent proved very trying and we were forced to stop every few minutes to regain our breath. Mesjidi Khan

seemed to be the only one who did not feel any effect from the rarefied air and steep ascent, and managed to reach the summit half an hour before I did. We passed by the ruined rest house of Siah-Seng (*siah*, black, *seng*, field), with still another pass to cross. We then had a two hours' ride to Gargareh, where we spent the night in the mosque, in reality in a mud-house which serves the purpose of mosque and rest house.

It was a wonderful moonlit night ; the whole valley lay bathed in a silvery light and the snowy tops of the hills shone dazzlingly white. In the evening, Gul Mahommed asked me for some quinine as he had a headache. While I was putting away the quinine I dropped a few tablets on the floor, but was too tired to pick them up. The next day I asked Gul Mahommed how he was feeling and he said that the quinine tablets had done him no good. It was possible that he had swallowed the other tablets that had fallen on the floor ! I was very much annoyed with the Afghans in the night. I had just got to sleep when, at half-past one, Gul Mahommed began bustling about with the tall candle saying that we must get up. My travelling companions, who no longer trusted my watch, went outside and said it was quite light and that dawn was about to break. That was of course nonsense, but our party was now wide awake and sleep was out of the question. It was also bitterly cold in our room, which made me quite willing to start. A fire was therefore lit, and about three o'clock we set off.

Our first goal was the terrace on the left of the valley

along which the path ran. • It was a biting winter night and the air was brisk. The path was so narrow that we had to lead the horses and go carefully ourselves in order to avoid falling over the edge of the terrace. We might possibly have been about a quarter of an hour's walk away from the village, when from the darkness of the night we heard shouting. Gulam Ali and Mesjidi Khan carefully groped their way down, and returned after a quarter of an hour. It was only the night watchmen who had mistaken us for either smugglers or robbers. As dawn was breaking we arrived at Marchane (Snake-house) where the *robat* lay in ruins. The river had cut deep rifts through the mountains and the sea-green water dashed along between the narrow rocks. We were now in the zone of crystal schist, and I was able to collect a fine set of specimens. We had just passed one of the rapids when we met a small caravan where Gulam Ali met one of his best friends. There followed a touching greeting, both of them hugging each other, and we did not see Gulam Ali again for an hour. It was a piercing day and the morning sun did not warm us at all, although there was a wonderful sunrise, the high peaks turning a deep crimson as the first rays of the sun struck them. All the small streams were frozen over and we had to keep a very careful watch on the horses to prevent them from slipping. A small dog joined us ; a funny little animal, very young, with woolly hair like that of a young sheep dog, but where he came from we did not know. The sun, in the course of the day, was strong enough to melt nearly all the snow. The hills gleamed in all colours,

while a broad zone of dark red tuff extended some distance. Towards noon we halted for a while on the summit of the pass. The sun was blazing and the air was now very hot. A deep silence reigned around us, though occasionally a stone would roll down, loosening others which would follow. It seemed as though the hills were trying to tell me their story : how they were formed, compressed and pushed upwards, only later to be torn away again and carried away in the course of time.

Once again, while crossing the pass, I counted the skeletons of eight camels, at one of which a dog was nibbling, rattling the bones which caused my horse to shy. Our little dog became inquisitive and wanted to play with the big dog, but the latter growled loudly, whereupon the little one began to back and to withdraw. We pushed on through this deserted world of mountains. The weather had cleared up, and about eleven o'clock I saw across the barren, disintegrated hills some beautiful snowy peaks, and on our arrival at noon at Ser-i-Kutel we had a wonderful view of the mountains of the Koh-i-Baba. The Afghans wanted to push on, but I explained to them that I wished to stay in order to make a circular panorama photograph and fix some points. We therefore stayed in Ser-i-Kutel for the night.

It was quite warm in the middle of the day. The sky was a clear blue and the snow on the high peaks gleamed in the sun. The small streams had thawed and the clear water bubbled along, leaping from stone to stone. There was a company of soldiers quartered in the

rest house who were doing their training in this district. The Captain, a big old veteran Hazara, was an excellent fellow. In the afternoon he asked me to tea and we lay basking in the sun on the flat roof of the *caravanserai.* His bodyguard was always with him and they presented arms every time I approached him. While we were drinking tea together he examined with amazement my compass (in Persian it is called *kibla nameh*, because with the help of a compass, one can tell the direction of Mecca), my field-glasses and my camera. He gave me the feeling that the same thing had happened somewhere a long time ago. On that occasion we had also sat on the flat roof of a *caravanserai* and in the same surroundings, the same language being spoken, among the same people. An odd feeling takes possession of one in such times ; we scarcely dare to breathe and cannot understand the inner workings of the mind. We wish that the veil which covers our eyes would lift to show us these hidden secrets, but as soon as our dreams come, they vanish into nothing and reality is again with us.

After tea we climbed a neighbouring hill from which there was a beautiful view. There was, however, a wind blowing and the Captain, as well as Mesjidi Khan, who had accompanied me, were cold in spite of the sheepskins they were wearing. ' *Bisjar chunuk äst, bisjar chunuk äst,*' ' It is bitterly cold,' said the Captain often to me in order to make me give up my sketching. I did not, however, take the hint but worked quietly on, taking some photographs later.

November 24th : We were under way about half-past six and were greeted with a glorious sunrise. I had hurried on ahead, leaving the others behind. A thin blue-green veil, very subdued and misty like a breeze, was drawn across the sky in the east, and a few small golden clouds tipped with rose floated over the snowy peaks. I sat down on a large rock and looked towards the east, where every minute the sun rose higher over the countryside. I felt neither the wind nor the cold ; this magnificent spectacle held me spellbound. If I could only put these colours permanently on record—they were indescribable, so unreal, so fairy-like in their beauty. As I gazed the flaming sky turned an even deeper red, and still more glowing became the snowy peaks ; a deep yearning filled me. I would like to have dwelt for ever in such scenes, burying them in my soul ; such sights are only passing on this world, as fleeting as good fortune which, scarcely is it given than it vanishes again. Long afterwards are we able to feast on such sights ; in the gloomy hours of grey days, when everything seems comfortless and tedious, suddenly these pictures spring before our eyes, reminding us of our good fortune and giving us renewed courage. Then came the sun, turning the peaks a rosy red, a sea of light pouring over this mountainous world and waking it from the cold arms of night. Again and again, day after day, I was filled with wonder at the triumphal progress of the sun, which had now become my best friend. The sun is to me the symbol of goodness and purity, ever pointing the way to the heights above, leading to eternal happiness.

We were now at the source of the Hilmend ; we had crossed the high ridges and were looking down into the deep ravines and valleys that the river had carved out of the mountains. All around us, veiled in misty violet, stood the white peaks and crags of the hills which encircle the high Hilmend plateau. The rocks were steep, and far below us we saw the small wooden bridge which spans the river. We seemed shut in by rocks, composed of multi-coloured stones. On the banks of the river a million fine micaceous flakes sparkled like silver, which, mixed with the sand, reflected the sun. At that time of year there was little water flowing in the river ; but in the spring and midsummer there are tremendous floods which pour down and can even be heard in the far-distant rest house of Ser-i-Kutel.

We crossed the bridge and climbed the other bank to the edge of the plateau. The path was frozen over, and the horses slipped and stumbled, so that we were compelled to put sand and stones on the ice. We met a few families of Hazaras, the land being otherwise desolate and uninhabited, and of animal life we had in fact seen nothing. We crossed the big plateau, the hours passing slowly. We were then in an interesting volcanic district ; on the right of the path I found an asbestine hill, porphyry and granite, frequently mixed with basic volcanic stones. We soon came to a broad plain, in which was situated the large village of Pah-Kol. For the first time after a long interval we saw trees. The houses here were literally covered with sheep's dung, put there to dry in the sun,

later to be used as fuel. We again had a glorious view of the Koh-i-Baba range, while in front of us appeared a high plateau intersected with small streams. With the help of the field-glasses I was able to pick out the *caravanserai* of Badassia, but we had a long journey before we reached it. The horses were moving slowly and their speed decreased from day to day. When one sits every day for ten hours in the saddle one gradually becomes tired and indifferent to everything, and I think that I really did succeed at times in thinking of nothing.

About four o'clock we came to the rest house, which was deserted. Gul Mahommed had been to the village and had tried to buy provisions and fuel, but the villagers were most unfriendly and gave him no assistance. There was therefore nothing to be done but to help ourselves. The rest house was out of repair in one or two places and the roof knocked in so that we could see the thick beams, which would have made wonderful fuel. Unfortunately it was impossible to get at them or to break off small pieces. What failed us were tools. I had only a hammer, which I used for cracking stones, and a big pocket-knife. After hours of search and trouble, we at last found a few bits of wood ; in addition to that I cut off pieces of the beam with my knife, so that at any rate we were able to light a small fire. Dinner was also a sad affair, consisting only of dry bread with sugar, after which we went to bed early. The night proved bitterly cold and an unfriendly morning with a biting wind and a tingling frost awaited us. The moon was still shining, and the stars twinkling

as the animals were loaded up. One could plainly see the moon sinking in the sky, till it vanished behind the high wall of the rest house and its light only fell on to the court-yard through the open door.

The sunrise was again a wonderful sight. A small pass lay in front of us ; it was low, but it gave us much trouble. It was bitterly cold and although we were on foot we were all frozen to the marrow, and our lips and hands were chapped and bleeding. On the summit of the pass we tried to light a fire, but the scanty shrubs were frozen so hard that we had to hack them out first with a hammer, which, with our icy hands, was not an easy matter. My geological hammer proved useful for everything ; many times daily Juma asked for the *chergosh*, as he called it, whether it was to break up loaf-sugar or to make mutton tender by severing the bones, or whether it was to hit an offensive cat with it. The temperature here was — 18 degrees centigrade. We were pleased when our path lay downhill and we were able to ride in the morning sun. Gul Mahommed stayed behind, and had the good luck to be able to purchase from some Hazara huts a few pounds of most beautiful grapes, which, though cold and half frozen, tasted very good. We were again surrounded by high hills, ricks, snow and boulders ; there was not a speck of green to be seen nor a shrub. We rode on through a wild picturesque ravine where there were a large number of vultures. They were perched silently on the crags, as though carved out of the rock, and it was only when we threw stones at them that they flew away with a heavy

beating of wings to the high peaks. Once again we came to the wide valley of the Hilmend in which are many settlements.

That day we sent Gul Mahommed on ahead to buy provisions for the evening. He swung on to his horse and went off at the gallop, and when we caught him up an hour later he had actually obtained some chickens and five loaves of bread, which we tied on to the pack-pony. The snow-covered mountains of the Koh-i-Baba now lay close on our left ; I took several photographs and made a sketch of the main range. The Hilmend valley is laid out with terraces, showing that this river flowed at a higher level in earlier times. Wherever one goes in Afghanistan one sees signs of a damper climate. It is only in the highest mountain ranges that there appear in the Ice Age to have been more glaciers. Otherwise the ice period manifests itself by enormous deposits of sediments ; big rivers must have flowed through the land, leaving many lakes. These are, however, questions which I shall deal with in the scientific work of the expedition.

In front of us, south of the river, was an ascent leading to a high pass up which a large camel caravan was slowly working its way, and which we also had to cross. There was snow everywhere, as we were now already over 9000 feet up. Just before we reached Jaokul we came to the main caravan route from Turkestan to Bamian—the Hajigak pass which leads from Jaokul to Kabul. The *caravanserai* of Jaokul was full of life and only with a great

deal of trouble did we find room. The people were very unfriendly, and the price of food was high.

We started off again the next morning about five o'clock after a cold night. There was a full moon and it was very light owing to a heavy snowfall. The rise from the rest house to the summit of the Unai pass was gradual, and, in the freshness of the morning, walking was a real joy. We were still surrounded by vast snow-covered peaks. We saw a few graves in a small hollow by the side of the path ; ordinary stone slates and blocks of rocks were piled on top of one another, and at the head and foot of the graves were placed two high stone-slates. Juma, who had been to Jaokul before, told us the following story :

It was one winter's night, when a large caravan, coming from Turkestan, was camping in this little valley. The camels lay down in rows next to one another after their loads had been removed. Watch-fires were lit, tea was made and *pilau* was prepared, after which all went to sleep. The caravan was bringing Government revenue from Turkestan to Kabul and even had a military escort. Suddenly, in the night, the stampeding of horses was heard, and before anyone knew what had happened, a strong band of robbers rushed the camp. Hard fighting followed in which the robbers got the upper hand, shot many of the Government escort and vanished with the booty among the hills. In spite of a thorough search and investigation the thieves were never caught.

To resume our journey, just before reaching the summit

of the pass, we saw a wolf dragging the skeleton of a horse, but he decamped as soon as he spotted us. Far below us in a snowed-in valley, we noticed what we thought were two wolves, but on looking through our field-glasses we discovered that they were two yellow dogs. We reached the summit of the pass as the sun rose. In the west the sky was still dark and the full moon was shining with its silver-yellow light, but in the east the sky was a pale greeny colour. The sunrise always brought such wonderful and unforgettable pictures that I cannot help referring to them again. It is only when one is rid of the fetters of civilization, and free to feel the influence of the beauty of Nature that one becomes one with Nature and learns to love the earth and life.

The Unai pass was the last high pass on the way to Kabul, and we then descended to lower and warmer regions. Even after a short time, we noticed the change in the vegetation. We were in the district of the upper sources of the Kabul River. High poplars enclosed the river, and as we passed a small grove of about twenty to thirty trees some Afghans enthusiastically called out, '*Jangal, jangal,*' meaning a wood. On the way there were small booths where one could buy tea, bread and fruit. We halted at a beautiful shop, or rather a tea-place, sat down on the carpet and ordered tea. The sun was warm and it seemed to us as though we had suddenly returned to summer time, as the day before we had nearly 20 degrees of frost, and now the sun was scorching us. While we rode on, Mesjidi Khan and Gul Mahommed

engaged in a terrible quarrel. We were riding along quite peacefully when Mesjidi Khan suddenly got off his horse and threw Gul Mahommed to the ground. The latter, nothing daunted, seized Mesjidi Khan by the leg so that he fell down and they both rolled over in the dust. To the accompaniment of thumps and blows, punches and bites, the contest was fought out until at last the active Gul Mahommed overcame Mesjidi Khan ; but throughout the day they continued to hurl abuse at each other. About eleven o'clock we passed the *robat* of Ser-i-tsheshme on our left, and travelled as far as the *robat* at Kute Eshrau in the company of two small boys who were riding on a donkey. They sang entertaining songs and were very cheerful and in high spirits. Now and then they would allow the donkey to gallop ; but once the small grey animal turned obstinate and both boys lay rolling in the dust. The poor donkey suffered for this infamous act, as he was well beaten and had stones thrown at him.

We had a real clean up in the rest house that night ; we changed our clothes and shaved ourselves to celebrate our arrival at Kabul the next morning. We heard some alarming stories about robbers, and Gulam Ali insisted that I should put my revolver in working order and that Mesjidi Khan should see that his gun was all right. We then went to sleep early. To-morrow was our last day's march to Kabul. We were up early and under way by five o'clock. It was again bitterly cold, but there was little snow lying on the hills, although we had already climbed over 3000 feet. The Sefid Chak pass, which we

crossed in the course of the morning, is as famous as the Unai. Mesjidi Khan made out that every person coming towards us was a robber and had the gun ready in his hand. We gradually worked our way up the pass, but met no robbers, only caravans and a few Hazaras. Many of them had long-handled hatchets, which they used as a protection against wolves. We also met nomads in tattered clothes, carrying spears. When we were near the summit we noticed among the rocks a small band of young men armed with muskets ; these turned out to be Government troops on escort duty, who nearly mistook us for robbers.

On the summit of the pass we halted and waited until Gul Mahommed arrived with the pack animals. The mountains here were bleak and barren and covered with stones, with not a patch of green to be seen. Below us we saw a mud fort, near which we were stopped and asked to write in a large book that everything was in order and that we had encountered no robbers. The further we went, the more full of life the route became. We passed caravan after caravan and also two elephants at work. We had a midday halt at a small tea-stall at the side of the road, and then continued on our way. It was warm in the sun and riding became pleasant. About two o'clock we arrived in Kabul and Gulam Ali showed me the Babur Bagh where the German Legation is situated. I had seen a few pictures of Kabul before and I recognized the two characteristic hills, on which stand the old ruined fortifications, while between them the river has cut a ravine-like gap.

Just outside the town we had to pass the Customs watch, and an official accompanied us through the narrow dark corners of the bazaar to the Customs-house where our baggage received the necessary seal. Mesjidi Khan in the meantime had fetched a cart and had also found out where my comrades were. A quarter of an hour later, while driving along a wide avenue with high trees on either side, I met Blaich who greeted me warmly, and I was once again with my friends, from whom I had been separated for two months.

In winter, from December to May, the way through the Hazarat, which I have described in the previous two chapters, is closed owing to the heavy snowfall, and all caravans that come from Herat must take the roundabout route through Khandahar, which had also delayed my friends. The hardships of crossing the Hazarat in winter are terrible, as we know from the reports of the Indian, Mogul Baber (1483–1530), which are set out in his memoirs and from which I give the following extracts : ' From the moment when we left Lenger it continued to snow till we came to Chekh Cheran (opposite Daolat Yar), and the further we went the deeper the snow became. When we reached Chekh Cheran the snow was up to the knees of the horses, and two or three days later it became so deep that in many places the animals could find no footing ; and yet it continued to snow. . . . Sultan Bischai, our guide, lost the way and could not find it again. On the next day the snow was so deep that in spite of every effort we could not find the way, and could

move neither forward nor back. We spent a whole week in treading down the snow, and failed to cover more than two or three miles a day. I, myself, helped in the work. At every step we sank in up to our chests, and as the strength of the leader began to weaken, after a few paces, he had to be relieved. Behind him ten to twenty men followed, after which came a riderless horse sinking in up to the girth which, after advancing ten to fifteen steps, was completely exhausted.' After a few days they reached Anjukan, from whence they came to a cave called Khamal, at the foot of the Zerin pass. All these places must lie in the hills which stretch between Akserat and Bamian. The story then goes on to say: 'The first troops reached Khamal during the day, but towards evening and late at night, stragglers still continued to arrive, so that all stopped where they were, some of them even remaining in the saddle till morning. The cave was small; with a spade I shovelled the snow away and thus made myself a bed. I buried myself as far as the shoulders in the snow, but did not reach the ground; this hole, however, gave me some protection from the wind. Some wished that I should go into the cave, but I felt that it would not be fair to those to whom I was indebted that I should be comfortable and warm, while my soldiers were outside in the snow and storm. It was only right that I should suffer the hardships and difficulties to which they were subjected. There is a Persian proverb which says: "Death in the company of good friends is a joy." I therefore stayed in the snow-storm till evening prayer;

the snow fell so fast that soon my head, lips and ears were covered with snow, which gave me a violent ear-ache during the night.' At evening prayer one group of his people discovered that the cavern was big enough to take in everybody. This description gives one a good idea of the dangers of travelling in winter on these routes.

CHAPTER VII

KABUL

KABUL, the capital of Afghanistan and the residence of the Amir, is situated in a large fertile plain surrounded by high hills. Anyone approaching from the west—from Herat—would only see the town at the last minute, the view being obscured by two ridges, the Asmai and the Schere Derwaza. The Bala Hissar ruins crown the latter, and although Kabul itself must have been besieged in earlier times, there are no ruins left. We missed the beautiful minarets overlaid with blue tiles and the cupolas, which we had seen in Herat. The whole of Kabul is a mass of mud huts, with only one or two houses built in European style to break the monotonous grey-brown of the walls. There are fine, wide streets, lined on either side with poplar and mulberry trees ; but there are many gloomy narrow lanes which even in daylight are so dark that one has to walk slowly and take great care not to fall into a hole or ditch. The banks of the river, which flows through the town, are picturesque, while there are also beautiful avenues for walks. The main thoroughfares are watered before sunrise and just before sunset. On either side of the roads are ditches

from which the water is simply shovelled out on to the streets. While this is happening one has to exercise great caution not to get in the way, as the men never stop in their work, however many pedestrians there are about.

The houses were mostly two-storied with a four-cornered ground-plan. They had all of them only one entrance which was gained by means of wooden doors, mostly double ones, which could be locked. The Afghans do not know real locks ; on the inside of the doors heavy chains are generally fixed, so that one locks the door by fixing the chain on to the hook placed on the other door ; the living-room doors are also locked in this manner. The inner courtyard, through which a small stream often flows and where there is a flower-garden, is shut in by four walls, and most of the windows look out on to the courtyard. There are generally three or four staircases leading to the big sitting-rooms, which seldom connect with one another, so that, in order to go from one room to another, one has to go down to the courtyard and then up another flight of steps. The houses are therefore rather complicated, and I have never climbed so many staircases as I did during my stay in Kabul. In the old houses are very beautifully carved windows, many with small balconies overlooking the streets from which one can view the gay scene.

The houses are always built of sun-dried mud bricks, held together by a wooden framework. When the scaffolding stage is reached, the walls are then overlaid with *gil*, or clay, which is mixed with finely cut straw, and then all

the remaining openings are closed. Later, when the layer of *gil* is dried, the walls are white-washed, and mats are laid over the crossbeams of the ceilings. A thick layer of mud is then put on and the roof is finished. In winter, when the snow melts, the *gil* becomes soft, the water then naturally leaks through to the mats, which likewise become saturated, so that occasionally a lump of mud from the ceiling falls on one's head. When this happened to us, in winter, we determined to have a thicker layer of mud put on the roof, which was soon done. A deep pit was dug in front of our house and from a ditch near by water was poured in, so forming a thick paste. Five or six men then stepped into the mire and stirred it about, after which it was placed in buckets, hauled on to the roof and simply emptied there.

A stroll through the bazaar gives the best idea of life in Kabul. I gained my first impression on my arrival from Herat, when riding through the narrow alleys on my pony. The scene was bewildering and it took a long time before I was able to find my way, in the confusion of the narrow roads and alleys. In most places the streets were full of primitive wooden erections, on which mats were laid, very similar to those one sees at our own yearly markets. There were rows and rows of stalls ; the traders, however, did not stand behind their 'counters', but with crossed legs squatted on their stalls. Those who could not afford to buy a site sat at the street corners and sold their goods : matches, bread, small cakes and fruit. It was always very crowded and

if one was not careful one would be run into, as few Afghans ever make way for Europeans. In the midst of this medley of human beings, tripped donkeys laden with wood, bricks and fine straw, camel caravans passed slowly, or riders pushed their way through in a domineering manner. The air constantly rang with the words, *khabadar*, *khabadar*, or beware, beware, or the *paisa bideh*, *paisa bideh* of the beggar, meaning ' give me a farthing'. If one wanted to buy anything, one had to bargain for a long time. While the Indians advertised their wares and shouted to the merchants opposite, the Afghans remained quietly in their stalls, drinking tea and smoking the water-pipe. They often seemed to resent a visit of inspection as it disturbed their peace and contemplative existence. One generally opened a transaction by bidding a third of the sum that the dealer asked. The latter would shake his head, put away the article in question, and one then left, only to be recalled after going a few paces, when the bargaining would begin afresh. The dealer would then offer two-thirds of the first named sum and one gradually gave in, until an agreement was reached. If one came a second time, the dealer would know quite well what was wanted and would fetch out the article in question and begin the bargaining and haggling again. Sometimes he would ask you to partake of tea in his booth, when both of you would squat on the ground in all friendliness, paying each other compliments ; the bargaining would continue until the chosen article was beaten down to half price. There were few dealers who had fixed prices.

If one wished to change money, one called on all the exchange merchants, who were situated in the centre of the bazaar. As soon as they saw what one wanted, they would all shout at once, each one trying to do business. I was sometimes able to pick up old Greek Bactrian coins, but they were mostly in bad condition and very worn by constant handling. There were a few stalls at which one could obtain all kinds of European goods from tooth brushes and chlorodyne to French perfumes, ice-machines and small harmoniums. Each trade and craft had its separate district in the town. There were six to eight stalls next to each other, in which the coppersmiths worked, turning out beautiful plates and dishes. A deafening noise reigned here so that one could not hear oneself speak. The saddlers were opposite, and in the centre of the bazaar were the cloth and carpet merchants. It was only rarely that one found anything beautiful or valuable, such as a fine decorative Mauri with its coloured patterns and deep blue-red Heratis, which often have a fine soft gloss. The gaiety of the scene was added to by the dyers ; there stood the large barrels with their deep green, red or blue solutions, while high above the street were stretched ropes on which fluttered the newly-dyed fabrics.

The most interesting part was the bazaar for second-hand goods. It was sometimes possible to buy the most curious of articles there, and it was often a mystery to me how they arrived in Afghanistan. There were mouse-traps, old musical instruments, pictures of European rulers, yellow from old age, old English uniforms and

French novels, even Rothschild's *Handbook for Salesmen* had managed to find its way here. The *huqqa*, or water-pipe lenders, too, cannot pass unmentioned ; they sat at the street corners, and on payment of a *pais* (one-eighth of a penny) allowed one to have a draw. There were unusual sights in the slaughter-houses and open kitchens, where a row of boiled sheep's heads did not give one a good appetite.

I must not forget the begging children. When walking through the streets one would suddenly hear a small soft voice saying, ' Sahib, *pais bideh*,' ' Sahib, give me a *pais*,' and two dark eyes would gaze up at one. I can still see one little beggar girl of not more than ten or twelve years who was known throughout the whole colony, who went round in rags, but yet wore silver rings on her fingers. On her head she had a thickly woven dirty cap, under which the black hair shone. She had large dark brown eyes, which sometimes had a begging look, sometimes a frightened look, but often a roguish twinkle. She knew quite well that she could always obtain a copper or a silver coin from any European. She would sit for hours in front of the door of our house, playing with her friends who were just as poor and ragged as herself. They would play at marbles with small mutton bones or amuse themselves by throwing stones into the dirty water in the ditches. When a European arrived, she immediately stopped playing, placed herself in front of our door and spoke with the most musical tone imaginable, ' *Paisa bideh* ' ; she would then put her hand in an embarrassed manner to her

mouth and gaze at the white man with beseechingly sad eyes. Seldom was anyone so hard as to pass her by without giving her anything. Her face would then light up and she would laughingly rejoin her comrades at play. She had a small friend who had just as black hair and eyes as she, but who was miserable and sick. Occasionally they both slung a linen sack over their shoulders and would go begging and chattering through the narrow alleys of the bazaar. Here they would obtain a piece of dried bread, there an apple or some slightly rotten grapes, and then they would steal some small cakes in a most barefaced manner and run away. I often met both of them in the deserted parts of the town.

A description of bazaar life in Kabul would be incomplete if no mention were made of the dogs that were everywhere. Generally they sat in front of the stalls and always sought sunny places, where they would lie sleeping four or five together. They never got out of the way, preferring to be trodden on or run over. Occasionally they would bite, and there then followed a series of kicks and blows ; most of them were mangy, and stared at us viciously.

The climate of Kabul is very healthy owing to its altitude. In summer the temperature rises from 35 to 40 degrees centigrade in the shade at noon, and falls at night from 25 to 23 degrees. In the winter time it is sometimes very cold indeed and the thermometer often records 15–20 degrees below zero. The bad weather comes in the winter half of the year from December to May, but in

summer banks of clouds come up from the south and there are flashes as well as sheet-lightning in that direction, which is probably the tail of the Indian monsoon. Thunderstorms were rare on the whole ; in fact, there was little really bad weather. In spite of the high altitude there was much malaria, so that we were compelled to sleep under mosquito nets and to take plenty of quinine.

We experienced many earthquakes in Kabul ; scarcely a month passed without our feeling a tremor. Sometimes we were awakened by it, so that our beds actually seemed to move. The worst earthquake, however, that I experienced was in Jalalabad on my last day in Afghanistan. We had arrived late in Jalalabad, having had many punctures on the way. I was very well received at the Bagh-i-Shah palace by an Afghan Colonel and my quarters for the night were on the verandah. There was a full moon, like one often sees in our own country on a cold winter's night. The rays were white like silver on the paths and the stone floor of the verandah. About ten o'clock I went to sleep. Suddenly I heard a distant rumble, and immediately a great storm broke over the country. There was not a cloud in the sky. The window frames on the glass verandah were not cemented and the rattling of the panes was deafening. In spite of it all I managed to doze, until I felt a sudden shock, followed by others. I remained quietly in bed, as we had become accustomed to earthquakes in Kabul and were no longer even excited about them. I noticed, however, that the shocks became more and more severe, and I was just trying

to make up my mind whether I should run out into the garden, when the ceiling began to descend and big holes were made in the walls. I then went out as quickly as possible, and joined the inhabitants of the palace, Afghan soldiers and servants, who had already collected in the pale moonshine of the courtyard. We waited for a quarter of an hour and then ventured back again into the house. I was later informed that this earthquake was felt in Dakka as well as in Peshawar and even as far as Delhi. The enormous number of earthquakes that there are in Kabul are undoubtedly the cause of the great cracks that there are in the Kabul basin. Many of the big Afghan plains which lie between the hills are certainly inroads which have been made into the basin. In early times Kabul is said to have had such a severe earthquake that a large part of the town was destroyed.

There are picturesque parts along the banks of the river where deep valleys alternate with fruit-bearing plains. This must have been a long while ago, but one still hears old sayings referring to this period as the one of the King's daughter whose husband caused the lake, that once covered the Kabul Plains, to be emptied in order to lay out gardens and palaces. Where the Teng-i-Gam valley commences, the rocks are said at the time to have been blasted, in order to empty the lake.

The country round Kabul is very pretty. There are rows and rows of gardens and fields through which run numerous irrigation canals. Small mud villages are hidden away under high and venerable poplars and mulberry trees. The

cultivated areas form a sharp contrast with the limestone weather-beaten rocks on which one can rarely find a bush or a flower. At the foot of the Paghman chain, at an altitude of about 7000 feet is the summer residence of the Amir. If it is too warm in May, the Government moves to Paghman. All ministers must go and Kabul becomes noticeably quiet and still. Paghman lies about sixteen miles from the capital, at the foot of the hills which surround the plain in which Kabul lies, and the highest peak is over 15,000 feet and is covered with snow right on until the autumn. There are beautiful gardens here and many fine old trees for which the Court gardener of the Amir has gained great awards. Everywhere are fresh springs, and tall trees rouse memories of German woods. There is said to be a path leading up the hills to a small lake, which is frozen over most of the year. Here, every year, is celebrated the Independence Fête, the Jeshm ; unfortunately it was postponed in the year 1920 owing to the unsettled conditions. In comparison to Kabul Paghman is a pleasant health-resort, the air being wonderfully fresh and clear. In winter, however, it lies under a thick cover of snow and only a few watchmen remain up in the hills. It is curious to find there a triumphal arch built by Turks.

The Amir, Amannullah Khan, after the last Afghan-English War of 1919, opened up his country to Europeans. German engineers are now making streets, and their architects are building the new town of Darulaman. A German medical mission superintends the hospitals and

the celebrated German-Afghan company is trying to reorganise the administration and business of Afghanistan. A German and a French school have been founded. There were also Italians in the service of the Amir, but many of them left the country in the autumn of 1924. The Amir sincerely wishes to improve his country in every possible way, but unfortunately he tries to do too much at the same time. He has great plans and ideas in his mind, but needs a vast amount of money in order to carry them out. The most important thing for the country is the extension of the roadways and the building of good streets so that transport facilities can be improved and become cheaper. A bold plan is to build a road along the banks of the Kabul river, which would require great ingenuity on the part of the engineers as the river has broken through the high mountains forming deep ravines which extend between Kabul and Jalalabad.

The building of the new town has given rise to many differences of opinion. Undoubtedly it will be necessary later to build, but at the moment the riddle still awaits solution. It is quite certain that the majority of the inhabitants are against it as it will cost a great deal of money, and the *mullahs*—the Mohammedan priests—use this argument whilst inciting in secret; they very much resent the fact that Europeans are now allowed into the country. Generally speaking, the population is friendly towards Europeans, though there are exceptions, notably the Police, who seem to go out of their way to be unfriendly. In Kabul, one could walk about unhindered and alone in the bazaar;

I myself often went into the gloomiest parts of the town unmolested and scarcely anyone took any notice of me.

I saw very few of the women in Kabul. They go about thickly veiled and are wrapped in large blue or white cape-like clothes, though if one can judge by the children, they must be attractive. The nomad women, who go about unveiled, have remarkably pretty faces and bear a close resemblance to gipsies with their markedly oval faces, dark eyes and deep black hair. The old ones are, however, very ugly, judging by the faces of the old beggar women who squat on the banks of the river with their heads in their hands, continually mumbling their *paisa bideh*.

CHAPTER VIII

DREARY WINTER DAYS

We spent our first weeks in Kabul in the native 'hotel'. Our rooms were pretty, and there were *kelims* and mats on the floor on top of which we put down a few more carpets ; we had tables and chairs and slept on our camp beds, but as we all of us had a large number of possessions, there was not too much space. It was still warm and we were able to have our lunch on the small terrace in front of our room ; these were the last fine days of the year. The hotel was so expensive that we found it necessary to look out for another place to stay in, but there was not a house which suited us in the whole of Kabul, where there is also a shortage of houses. One day the hotel proprietor offered to let us a house he was building opposite the hotel. We had also thought of this house, which would have been very convenient. There were two large French windows on the ground floor which gave one the impression of being most suitable for conditions in Afghanistan. The rooms inside were large, so that we soon saw that we could not do better than to take the house.

The landlord, however, was a cunning fellow ; he was a

real business man and was under the impression that he could obtain from Europeans any sum that he asked. For days and even weeks the bargaining went on—how hateful is this bargaining in Afghanistan. Contracts were agreed upon, broken and remade. When the old swindler came to see us after lunch, the servants used to put a large *kelim* in the sun and bring tea, while we talked and bargained for hours. Even if one had the luck to come to an agreement, one could be quite certain that on the following day one would have to start afresh. We insisted therefore that a *mirza* or writer should be brought along, so that a copy could be made of the terms of the lease. The old fellow could neither read nor write, so we wisely did not sign the document at once but showed it to another man who thoroughly understood Persian. It then appeared that something had been added to the lease. Endless arguing followed before the contract was actually signed. The house was, however, only half finished, so that we could not yet move in. Doors and windows were missing and there were no stoves, but we were promised that everything would be ready in a week. The week passed, but when we saw the house again, there was practically nothing done. We were put off with excuses, but one afternoon a boy appeared and asked us to go and look at the stoves. At last work was progressing, at any rate it looked like it. Later these stoves frequently gave us trouble ; the smaller ones were made out of petroleum boxes and had this disadvantage, that one had to put on wood every half-hour. There was a bad supply

of coal in Kabul, but had there been a good supply in the country, there were no transport facilities for bringing it here. In the hotel we had had experience of that type of stove ; first it would smoke like a chimney, and then refuse to draw. If the fire did burn, then the stove became red-hot in a few minutes, but if one went away for a minute the fire would have burnt out and would have to be relaid. The larger stoves with water attachment were better and fairly satisfactory. We had already laid in a supply of fuel, as sometimes for days there was no wood in the bazaar, or it was wet and would not burn.

We soon had the first snowfall and it turned colder and colder. It was time that we moved, but the old fellow was full of excuses, though no work was being done on the house. The windows were still missing, the walls had not been whitewashed and not a door closed properly. The tale told us was that work was impossible during the cold weather and it was therefore necessary to wait till the snow had cleared. We threatened to cancel the contract unless he put in windows and locks to the doors in at least three rooms. Finally, after a long wait, we were able to move in. I shall never forget our first change of dwelling, the fuss as the carriers took our equipment bit by bit from the hotel into the new house. It was a great day for the servants as they could commandeer the carriers and order them about, but the most atrocious rows ensued.

We now had to do our own catering, and it was arranged that Juma was to act as cook. The poor lad, however, only knew how to make a *pilau*, and if one suggested a new dish

to him he stared with open mouth, so that Wagner often could not keep a straight face. Cooks always proved a worry to us. We had many of them ; in fact, once a court-cook of the Amir's, but in spite of this qualification we were not pleased. Before we could do our own cooking, we used to have our meals with the teachers, which meant finding our way in the dark through the narrow, gloomy alleys to the school, accompanied by a servant with a lantern. The food was good, and Juma was detailed to attend here to learn how to cook. As there were no ovens for baking, all food had therefore to be prepared in small coal pans. We left Juma alone for about four weeks before making him begin work. When we did start, we had meat dumplings day after day, for lunch and dinner, which made a great impression on him. It is possible that the mincing machine which we had obtained in the bazaar gave him some amusement. When we asked him if he could cook nothing else he said, 'Oh yes ; *pilau*' ! The poor fellow was simply maddening, but I think he yearned to be back again in the free caravan life. Often he used to stand there wrapped in thoughts and dreaming. We did not bother much about him in the hotel as my friends had engaged a good cook called Abdul Sebur, and Juma only had to see to cleaning my room, which he did very well. He also mended my clothes, sewed on buttons and tried to darn socks. There was, however, no place for him to sleep. It was now too cold outside or else he could have slept there. He therefore had to sleep in the stable with the Hazara stable-boy, and this cut him to the heart.

One morning when I went into the small, low, gloomy stable to have a look at my horse, I saw Juma shivering over the ashes of a dead fire. The Hazara had again gone away and Juma had to take over the post of watchman. Whenever the Hazara was wanted it was always, '*Hasara basar räft*,' meaning, 'The Hazara has gone to the bazaar.' I was really sorry for Juma. He had certainly thought his position in Kabul would have been different. As I came in he got up and said, 'Sahib, look, I have to sleep here, it's horrid and damp.' He then coughed and asked for a rug, with which I supplied him. Now and again I gave him a tip as he had looked after me well during the caravan journey. After all it was not his fault that he was so stupid. When I set out on my journey in the Hindu Kush he asked to come with me and I noticed that he yearned to get away from Kabul. Unfortunately we could not take him with us. Whilst he was engaged in his cooking efforts he was really quite content, but now he again had to look after the rooms. In the morning he had first to light the stove, as during the night the rooms always became very cold, even if the doors and windows were properly closed.

One winter morning, when it was bitterly cold outside and icicles were hanging on the windows, Juma came quietly into the room, thinking that I was asleep. He went slowly to our work-table to look for my cigarette case and furtively and cautiously lit a cigarette. Suddenly he saw I was watching him, and I shall never forget his look of embarrassment and surprise. He stood as though made

of stone, and ashamedly lowered his eyes. At first I was about to reprimand him very severely, but I had a certain sympathy for him, so I only said, shaking my head, 'Juma, what are you doing?' He did not answer, but put down the cigarette on the stove and left the room without a word. He never argued like other Afghans.

There was a definite change in the weather. Winter had indeed come; the skies were grey, and layer after layer of snow piled up, so that the servants had to work for hours to clear it off the flat roofs. Everything was damp and wet. While it was cold and was actually snowing, it was bearable; but when it thawed the streets were turned into a veritable morass. The snow on the roofs melted and water came through the ceilings in large drops. Dishes and pots were used and in one of the rooms we had to spread out the inner lining of a tent, in which a small pool soon formed, which had to be emptied out every half-hour. We all caught bad colds, and the rooms were barely warm. We put furs over our knees and often drank brandy, or rather *raki*, christened *Stacheldraht*, or barbed wire, which one of the Europeans concocted. We drank it mixed with orange juice and sugar, and as we had invented this mixture, it was at once called in the German colony, *Mark Oha*, *Oha* standing for *Orient-handelsaktiengesellschaft*, the Oriental Trading Co., Ltd. We did not stay up late at night as the lights were too bad for either reading or writing. We only had small stable lamps and if one were not careful they smoked. Before we went to sleep we used to make up the fire. We

then settled down quite close, put more wood on and gazed into the flickering flames. It soon became warm, and often gave out so much heat that it was impossible to sit close to it. But this pleasure lasted at the most a quarter of an hour, when the wood burnt out and it became cold again. We then covered ourselves with woollen rugs and sheepskins and talked for a while from beneath our 'skin-nests' before falling asleep. One day there was a specially heavy snowfall. In the morning when we looked out of our windows, we saw the snowflakes being whirled around and the hills opposite were invisible. Large crows sat motionless on the wall, the weather being too cold even for them. When I went for a stroll in the middle of the day, I sank deep into the snow and the white flakes were so dazzling that I could with difficulty keep my eyes open. I was very pleased to get back to my mud hut and warm myself with a cup of tea.

On February 20th we had a good view of the total eclipse of the moon. It was in the evening about eight o'clock ; I was just going to leave the house when I heard outside a curious confusion of voices, a mysterious buzzing and long drawn-out calls echoing from the hills. I went outside and saw the countryside bathed in a peculiar light from the rays of the moon ; it was not a silver light which shone over the snowy hills, on the flat roofs or mud-walls, but soft blue shadows which seemed to be creeping over the countryside. It was the eclipse of the moon. Like a thousand candles the stars flickered in the heavens and their brilliance was even more enhanced

by the clear atmosphere, for Kabul lies at an altitude of about 5300 feet. Slowly the shadow of the earth drifted across the face of the moon, and at half-past nine there was a total eclipse. There was not a sound in the streets ; here and there one saw an Afghan with a lantern in his hand, hurrying home. The shops were closed ; only from the provision shops flickered the dim light of oil lamps. A most uncanny stillness lay over the land. The moon hovered like a red ball in the sky, like the sun when it lights up the moor at home piercing the morning mist. The babel of voices became worse and worse ; louder and louder came the calls of prayer to Allah ; rockets were shot into the air to drive away the evil spirits who were trying to engulf the moon. At nine o'clock there was still a total eclipse. A few cold blasts of wind swept over the land, causing the loose window panes in the mud houses to rattle. When I returned late at night, the face of the moon was again clear. I heard strange music ; the return of starlight was greeted by drums, flutes and singing, which was kept up till late at night. So passed the gloomy winter days, slow and lingering, as though spring would never return.

CHAPTER IX

THE HIGHEST RANGES OF AFGHANISTAN

IN the extreme north-east of Afghanistan, on the Indian frontier towards Chitral, there stands a high peak like a sentinel towering above the rest. No European has ever beheld its western slopes and gullies, which look towards Afghanistan, or crossed its glaciers. Its snow-crowned crest soars to a height of about 25,000 feet into the blue air overlooking one of the wildest and most desolate regions of the Asiatic mountain ranges. It is the Tirich Mir, familiar to all sojourners in Chitral, who have gazed from afar at its ice-bound slopes and snow-clad peaks. To the north of this giant peak are two others of about 25,000 feet, one of which is also called the Tirich Mir. The inhabitants of Chitral have many legends about these ice giants, as Durand has recorded. At the foot of the mountains there is said to be a lake, surrounded by large, flat rocks, wherein the fairies wash their clothes. At times their voices may be heard faintly singing, or they may be seen floating round the towers of the old Shogoth Fort, invariably about ten days before the death of one of the reigning family. One of the rulers of Chitral is even said to have married a fairy.

The legend goes that in a small village in the south of Chitral the mountain fairies collect together every Friday night to pray at a place which is marked by a large stone. There is not a soul who dares to go shooting in that district. On one occasion when a native lost himself and had to spend the night in the neighbourhood of this place, he heard ghostlike voices calling to prayer and the air was filled with a curious confusion of noises. Those who have seen the fairies tell us that they walk on foot or ride through the air, are very beautiful and are dressed in white. Curiously enough they are supposed to have no knees or joints in their feet and their toes are said to be reversed. We are also told that they carry men off, keeping them ten–fifteen days, but treat them well. Once upon a time when a native of Chitral was out shooting, he fired at a wild goat and wounded it, but it escaped. A few days later a lame man came hobbling into the village and asked the hunter why he had shot at him. While the latter was protesting that he had only shot at a wild goat the lame man, who was known to be a magician, said that he himself was the wild goat. There are other travellers who relate curious stories concerning the fairies of the Hindu Kush who, in moonlight, float around the high snowy peaks and mislead travellers.

It is only of recent years that we have heard much about the lofty peaks of the Hindu Kush, bleak and wild as they are, with not a speck of green to refresh the eye. The daily extremes of temperature cause fissures in the rocks, while avalanches blot out the cliffs and fill up the valleys.

No peak has yet been climbed, and large areas of the mountain ranges are still quite unexplored. The Hindu Kush lies like a mighty barrier round the North-West Frontier Province of India, cutting straight across Afghanistan to the westward. Some of the highest passes in the world lead from Chitral over the mountains to Badakshan and the banks of the Oxus. Many of them can only be traversed on foot, and are always dangerous, not only on account of natural obstacles, but because they are infested by marauding tribesmen—especially Kafirs—who lie in wait for the weary traveller and rob him, just when he thinks he has safely reached his journey's end. That this mighty range, despite its great height, cannot be regarded as an impenetrable barrier in case of war, was proved by Sir Aurel Stein, who pointed out that a Chinese army crossed this range, and penetrated as far as Kashmir in A.D. 747, which must have been a wonderful achievement. English explorers who have visited this district at the junction of the Hindu Kush and Kara-Korum, graphically describe its amazing ruggedness, its towering cliffs and deep gorges. Earthquakes devastate these mountains, cleaving them apart and forming deep gullies, through which torrents of melting snow rush down. The forces of Nature have by no means exhausted themselves among these mountains even at the present day.

From the geological point of view, it is not so very long since the highest peaks of the Hindu Kush were covered by a lake, one arm of which joined the lake which once covered Tibet. Fossilized shells have been found on

the Nuksan pass, 15,000 feet up. Mighty forces must have been at work, to throw up these towering ranges, piled up high above each other, and volcanic upheavals have displaced the various layers which now form the backbone of the chain with lofty peaks succeeding each other like waves. As I stood on a chalk ridge to the north of Barfak and surveyed the glorious vista of snow-clad mountains, glittering in the rays of the setting sun, I thought I recognized, far away to the eastward, one of the high, snow-crowned peaks which dominate Chitral. My field-glasses, however, revealed it as only a couple of gleaming clouds. Of the many passes over the Hindu Kush, the Chawak pass is the most famous, being the one which Alexander the Great crossed. This pass is over 10,500 feet high, and is still one of the most important caravan routes between Kabul and Turkestan. The route over the Salang pass has lately attracted attention, as it is being reconstructed by Italian engineers. The most important pass from Badakshan to India is the Dorah pass, which is said to be easy to cross, but is infested by Kafir raiders. The view from its summit, over the wide spaces of desolate Central Asia, must be magnificent, for the Hindu Kush separates two worlds.

We know very little about the regions lying between the Chawak pass and Chitral. Here is the secluded Munjan plateau where a rare dialect is still spoken, and where the lofty peaks are mirrored in blue lakes. The barrier of the Hindu Kush cuts of Kafiristan from Badakshan. Although the passes are tremendously high, and

cannot be crossed by pack animals, the Kafirs make use of them for their raids. There are probably few regions on earth so completely unknown as Kafiristan. As the various tribes are always at war with each other, anyone wishing to cross their country would have to make friends with each tribe he encountered. Furthermore, transport is only possible with porters, and innumerable dialects are spoken, so that explorers venturing into this region would have many difficulties to overcome.

The only European who ever visited this part was Robertson, who in June, 1889, under great difficulties, climbed the Mandal pass, which is about 13,800 feet high. In his interesting book he relates how even the Kafirs sometimes found the ascent difficult ; but, shouting and singing, they hurried ahead, lying down in the snow to have a snooze until the caravan caught them up. There he also found countless numbers of dead butterflies lying in the snow. Unlike the wild, marauding Kafirs, the inhabitants of Munjan, on the north side of the range, are a peaceful race. The district round the Chawak pass is liable to frequent attacks by one or other of the robber bands. I was told that the Governors ensure the safety of their country by paying a subsidy to the robber chieftains for keeping order in their districts. The British have a similar method in the Khyber pass, where they employ the marauding Afridi tribesmen to guard the pass, in return for an annual subsidy. The caravan is still the recognized mode of transport in the Hindu Kush, but the motor car has already pushed its victorious way as far as the passes.

One would naturally expect to find glaciers in a gigantic range like this, but the snow-line is very high, and in autumn hardly a speck of snow can be seen below 14,000–15,000 feet. The weather is too mild to permit of glaciers being formed, and only in the eastern portions, where the peaks rise to over 21,000 feet, does ice flow into the valleys. The snowfall in winter, however, is considerable, and most of the passes are then closed to traffic. The snow begins to melt in March, and, in the summer months, huge torrents rush through the valleys, frequently breaking down the bridges and doing much damage. There are no signs of Ice Age formations in the western part of the Hindu Kush, such as we meet with in the Alps. Hence there can be no comparison between the two, though there are peaks of 15,000 feet in both ranges. The Hindu Kush forms the watershed between the Indus and the Oxus. From the very earliest times, its rugged valleys were a place of refuge from the successive waves of invaders who swept over the mountains. Greek, Scythian and Mongolian conquerors marched through it with their armies, and, in the dawn of history, the Aryans must have crossed these passes on their way to India. Some day, perhaps, the Hindu Kush will again play a leading rôle in the decisive battle between the Russians and the British for the overlordship of Asia.

CHAPTER X

THE VALLEY OF THE GREAT BUDDHA

A GLANCE at the map will show us that from the Pamirs, the Roof of the World, vast mountain ranges stretch to the east and west. The Hindu Kush—the backbone of Afghanistan—lies in this neighbourhood. To the east, by Chitral, its summits reach up over 22,000 feet, with enormous glaciers, but to the west it gradually merges into the foothills of the Paropamisos. I set out early in January, 1924, to investigate the coal and iron deposits in the Hindu Kush district, as the Amir had expressed a wish to that effect. The Government had placed a car at my disposal which would take us to the foot of the hills, and possibly as far as Bamian. Blaich, who had to form certain opinions on agricultural matters, accompanied me.

It was a cold, gloomy January morning when the car fetched us at eight o'clock. It was snowing and the skies were grey ; large black crows sat motionless on the cornice of our house. Juma packed up our camp beds, our baggage was stowed away in the car, and having wrapped ourselves in our blankets and coats, we drove off. Our first driver was Michmandar, a young, wide-

awake Afghan, whose duty it was also to look after our well-being and accommodation. We drove slowly along the banks of the Kabul river; the snow was falling heavily and the neighbouring hills were thickly veiled. Suddenly our car stopped, in order to give a lift to another large party with an enormous amount of luggage. When everyone was safely in the car, we were so tightly packed that no one could move. Under the circumstances, this was rather a good thing as we were thus able to keep each other warm. I had no idea at first who all these people were, but I soon learned that one old fellow in a goat's skin, who reminded me of a picture I once saw of Jenghiz Khan, was our guide. He was addressed by the others as *Shikar Sahib*, which is a term of respect. On the driver's seat, beside Michmandar, was a new arrival who certainly looked like a European. I soon learnt that Abdul Kerim, as the Afghans called him, was a Pole, who had become a Mohammedan and was an engineer in the service of the Amir. There were also two or three servants accompanying us.

To the left of the road rose the Asmai, but although the peak is not high, it was wrapped in grey clouds. Alone and deserted stood the watchman's house on the hill, while in front of it paced a policeman with a fiery red cape. It was snowing hard and the white flakes seemed to be trying to bury everything under a thick white blanket. We had put the hood up as a protection against the snow and we could therefore see little of the countryside. The eternal shaking made one very tired, and each

of us in turn began to yawn, and the *Shikar Sahib*, who had completely wrapped himself up in a woollen shawl, dozed off. We had been driving for about an hour when suddenly the car stopped and we all had to get out. The bridge that lay ahead of us had fallen in, and numerous workmen were engaged in trying to repair it. We therefore had to drive down a side path to the stream, which was easily accomplished ; but unfortunately the car was not able to breast the incline on the other side. However, after much good advice had been offered, we at last succeeded in obtaining a stout rope, which we tied on to the front of the car. The workmen then tried to drag the car out ; it gave them great amusement, especially when suddenly the rope broke and everybody fell down, so that the laughing and joking never seemed to end. The second time we were more successful in hauling the car out, and we proceeded on our way.

It had stopped snowing and the nearer we reached the foot of the Hindu Kush, the warmer it became, and the snow in the plain had vanished. A large number of curious-looking people collected round the car when we halted in front of the *caravanserai* at Charikar in order to have our midday meal, which consisted of tea, bread, cheese and cakes as well as fruit. We climbed on to the roof of the rest house, and from here could see the gay scenes in the street and the courtyard. Straight in front of us was the main range of the Hindu Kush, whose highest peaks, over 15,000 feet, were wrapped in clouds. We took a stroll through the bazaar where we purchased

some sheepskin gloves, which later, in the extreme cold, were very useful to us. About two o'clock we drove on into the picturesque Ghorband valley. The weather cleared up later and a few blue patches appeared in the skies through the clouds. Below us we saw the rich cultivated valley through which ran the roaring Ghorband river. We passed many small villages and gardens and often met large caravans of camels. There was generally a panic when we drove past them ; the camels shied at the car, broke away, and ran up the banks ; in short, there was great disorder, and we were often cursed by the camel drivers, who for plain speaking left nothing to be desired. The donkeys, however, were the most cunning, and annoyed us very much more than did the camels. They were generally laden with large beams, and as soon as they heard our car coming they would stop and stand across the road forming a kind of turnpike. It sometimes took us more than a quarter of an hour to pass a small caravan of donkeys.

About five o'clock we arrived at Siah Gird, where everything had been prepared for us. We were put up in a small peasant's house, from which we had a beautiful view of the high mountains and the terraces on the valley sides. Siah Gird lies between the main range of the Hindu Kush in the north and the Paghman chain in the south. A wild-looking, narrow valley opposite the village leads up to the high Chahardar pass, which crosses the main range of the Hindu Kush and has been climbed by Griesbach. The peaks were wrapped in a thick mantle of snow, and at this time of year the high Hindu Kush

passes were closed. In the house the *mangal*, or the oval-brazier, which warms very well, was got going at once. Later *sandalis*, or a low table, was placed over it on which we put a woollen rug and thus warmed our feet. These *sandalis* were extremely warming, but I was not surprised to find later that I had caught a few unwelcome guests. Food arrived very late indeed, although we were all terribly hungry, it was not till eleven o'clock that the *pilau* was brought to us, with the result that it was midnight before we retired to bed. We ourselves slept in our camp beds, while the Afghans, on the other hand, lay down flat on the ground and wrapped themselves up in their woollen blankets.

We were up early the next morning. The sky did not look full of promise, and there was a peculiar kind of heavy atmosphere, which left us in a depressed state of mind. It was as if something ominous were hanging over us like the coming of a thunderstorm, though we were in mid-winter. We had determined to go straight on to Bamian and to postpone our visit to the coal deposits in the neighbourhood of Siah Gird. The route was very picturesque ; on both sides the disintegrated limestone rocks rose up in perpendicular walls, gleaming in all colours from deep red to violet. Small flakes of snow were lying at the entrances to the valleys and in the crevices of the rocks, while the higher ridges were completely covered with a snow-mantle which formed a sharp contrast with the leaden grey sky. Just outside Siah Gird we came to the Ghorband river ; the bridge was broken, so that

we had to find a ford. The chauffeur wanted as far as possible to unload the car, so we all got out, while some Afghans, standing on the bank, looked on at the performance. With them were a few donkeys, and while the servants waded barefooted through the icy water we crossed on the donkeys. We each had a stick in our hand and we then tried our luck. The river roared and splashed as the small animals stumbled through the water step by step. I had to raise my legs in order not to get wet as the water came up to the girths. When I reached the middle of the river, my donkey, with its usual obstinacy, stopped and refused to go on a step further. I beat him and kicked him, but he showed not the slightest inclination to proceed, and it was only after a halt of some minutes that he condescended to go on. Donkeys are not really stupid, but are the most obstinate of all animals and well understand the art of annoying people, out of sheer spite.

When we had all reached the opposite bank safely and the donkeys had been driven back, we continued on in the car. The sky became darker and darker, the clouds hanging in a threatening manner over the mountains, and it again began to snow. The snowflakes grew bigger and bigger, until we could scarcely see twenty yards ahead of us. It became colder and windier, and in places the surface of the road was frozen. It was only by our united efforts in putting sand and rubble on the surface and placing blankets and *kelims* under the wheels that we succeeded in moving forward. It took us about an hour, during which it snowed hard, to cover

about twenty yards of frozen road. We all looked like snow men and the car itself had become cold and damp. At length we came to the almost buried *caravanserai* of Kasi Besi where we halted for the night. There was nearly two feet of snow already in the courtyard, but it had been snowing here for some days ; and it was so cold during the night that we were unable to get warm. In the food line, things were not too bright, and we had to content ourselves with eggs fried in mutton fat, stale bread and water, while a solitary wax candle served for lighting purposes. Blaich and I had a special room set apart for us. The servants of the *Shikar Sahib* tucked us into our blankets and skins, but in spite of this I awoke repeatedly in the night shivering with cold.

The Shibar pass lay ahead of us with an altitude of about 9000 feet, and as it continued to snow throughout the night it was impossible to proceed further with the car. The *Shikar Sahib* had the evening before ordered horses, but there was a great deal of talking and arguing in the morning before the animals actually arrived. What noble animals they were ! I have never before in my life seen such awful specimens. We received a wooden saddle like those the natives use, which made riding no pleasure. It was still snowing when we left to ascend the pass which Timur himself had crossed as well as the Buddhist Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang, whose memoirs belong to travel descriptions of earlier times. The snow was so thick that at times the horses sank in up to their girths. There was a howling wind, and the higher we went the worse grew

the storm, whirling the powdered flakes until they settled on the white plains below. Laboriously and silently the caravan worked its way up. We were in the midst of a magnificent mountain scene—a sea of snow-white peaks and pinnacles—as far as the eye could reach.

The descent into the Bamian valley was easy. At the foot of the pass at Schumbul we were glad to change horses. We then rode on into the snowed-in gorge of Balulas. On either side rose the bare, black limestone rocks ; scarcely a ray of sun penetrated into this gorge, and it was terribly cold as we passed between its high walls. The surface of the path was frozen so that we could only make slow progress ; large icicles, which glistened like crystals, hung from the rocks. As soon as we had passed through the gorge and were again in the wide valley basin, it became warm, as, in the meantime, the sun had come out, and we could actually watch the melting of the snow. The changes of temperature in the highlands of Central Asia are considerable ; at night it is freezingly cold, and in the daytime one is baked in the sun. As we rode on the weather gradually cleared. The roaring Bamian river on our left reflected the sun's rays in its foaming waters, and glittered like a thousand jewels. To us it seemed as though spring had returned. We did not meet a soul. Our servants with the pack animals were a long way behind and we had neither seen nor heard them since early that morning when we left the rest house. Suddenly about one o'clock, we saw two carts coming in our direction which the Governor of Bamian had sent to

meet us, with two grooms who took charge of our horses.

It was a glorious drive through the Bamian basin, on that wonderful January afternoon which filled us with pleasant thoughts. The sky was a clear blue, and clouds as white as the snow drifted like sailing boats across the blue ocean of the heavens. On the opposite side of the valley to the south we saw the massive range of the Koh-i-Baba whose peaks soared aloft. It was still, save for the rustling of a stream which seemed to be playing with the large rocky boulders, and whose water, as clear as crystal, leaped from rock to rock. We drove on over the frozen road, with an ever-changing scene before us. We saw the ruins of the Zohak castle on the dark red sandstone rocks, which was mentioned by the Persian historian, Firdusi, in the tenth century, and which is also mentioned in the *Zend Avesta*; many such dwellings, characteristic of the Bamian valley, can be seen on the hillsides. Unfortunately a cutting north-west wind rose and we were nearly frozen in the cart. We therefore walked part of the way in order to keep warm. We reached our destination about five o'clock as the rays of the setting sun were beginning to light up the lofty rock walls. These walls, to the present day, are one of the sights of Afghanistan with their carved Buddhist statues about fifty yards high, probably the work of Indian artists about 1500 to 1800 years ago.

We were received by the Governor, whose house stood on a small plateau above the valley. He had placed at our disposal a small room in which we soon settled down

comfortably. Beneath the room was a brick oven which, as well as heating the room, was also soothing, as we always sat on the floor when we were not lying down on our camp beds. We were given tea when we arrived which we drank with great delight. The more one becomes accustomed to drinking tea the more one likes it, and in Kabul we used to drink it at nearly every hour of the day. I went out in the evening about ten o'clock in front of the house. The crescent of the moon was overhanging the pinnacles of the Hindu Kush and the stars were shining brightly. The high snowy ranges were bathed in the silvery light, which also lit up the valley. There was a deathly silence round us, save for a faint echo in this lonely winter night. I then meditated on the history of the valley.

I pictured the coming, about 2000 years ago, of Buddhist pilgrims journeying from distant India to the sacred Bamian valley ; and I painted the scene to myself of the passing through of the Greek conquerors, and the crossing of the Hindu Kush by the Chawak pass by Alexander the Great, both of whom later lost their kingdoms and power. The Scythians came from the north and north-east, passing in a southerly direction. In the year eight hundred, the Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang, also visited these parts, and tells us how these large Buddhist statues used to glitter when they were covered with gold. Then for a long time there are no historical records, until again, in the heart of Asia, troubles seethe like the turmoil in a witch's kettle. Like a thunderstorm the Mongols under Jenghiz Khan and Timur passed through, destroying and razing to the

ground everything that came in their way. I looked across at the ruined town of Gulgule, whose battlements, broken walls and cracked towers gleamed in the moonlight in a ghostlike manner. This town was also destroyed by Jenghiz Khan. Jaworski tells us in his book the following legend of its downfall :

'Owing to the fact that Gulgule had large subterranean reservoirs it was able to hold out for a long time in a siege. Jenghiz Khan tried to storm the town which was enclosed by a triple set of walls, but was driven back. Eventually, however, the town was destroyed in this manner. The daughter of the King of Gulgule had, we are told, become engaged to one of the sons of Jenghiz Khan, and overcome by her love for him she told him of the secret of these reservoirs, but made him swear not to reveal it. Jenghiz Khan succeeded, however, in extracting the secret from his son by promising to treat the town with consideration. As soon as the reservoir had been undermined, the town surrendered, owing to the lack of water. Jenghiz Khan in his rage over its long and obstinate opposition, razed it to the ground, massacring the whole population, even children on their mothers' knees received no mercy.'

We visited the large rock statues which have aroused the interest of travellers since earliest times. Jaworski has perhaps given us the best description, to which I have little to add. The reports about the height of the statues are very conflicting. I find the following figures :

	Small Figures.	*Large Figures.*
Moorcroft	36 yards (approx.)	50 yards (approx.)
Jaworski	37 „ „	43 „ „
Foucher	35 „ „	53 „ „

The statues are partly destroyed ; but the plaster in which they are encased is still in quite good condition. The destroyer of these statues is said to be Auranzeb, but this must not be accepted as certain. The Afghans to this day refer to the statues as idols, and according to them the small figure represents a woman, Shahmume, and the larger a man. It has, however, now been well established that these figures are Buddhist saints, and it seems to me that Moorcroft's view is the best, who put forward the theory that this valley was once the residence of a Grand Lama. Bamian at one time must have been a town of temples, similar to the large monasteries that we find in Tibet. We can more suitably compare Bamian with the caves of the thousand Buddhas in Tun-huang in the Nan-shan. This view is also held by the French archæologists who are now engaged in excavation work in Afghanistan. My visit was unfortunately too short to enable me to study the many caves with interesting pictures painted on the walls, which are beautifully executed. There are frequently to be found representations of gods with Nimbus, and on one wall I found six medallions representing Buddha in various attitudes of prayer. There is a wonderful frieze which extends from the roof of the niche in which the larger statue is found. It was, owing to the light, impossible for me to photograph these pictures, in which some beautiful faces of women attracted my attention. The colours that were chiefly allied, as far as I can remember, were green and red. We mounted a rough step, cut out of sandstone, in the wall of the rock

next to the smaller statue ; we came to a cave whose earlier pictures had been spoilt by smoke and overlaid with a dark lacquer colouring, so that I was only able to pick out small parts of the picture. On some of the walls we saw great scratches which appeared to be the results of sword cuts. We went as high as we could and succeeded in getting nearly to the head of the statue whose giant ears I estimated to be about three to four yards. From this lofty vantage point we had a magnificent view into the valley through which the Bamian river winds its way. We returned home, packed up ready for our next day's journey and went early to bed.

CHAPTER XI

THE AFGHAN HIGHLANDS IN WINTER

I SET out from Bamian over the Hindu Kush accompanied by the Governor, so that we formed a large caravan as he took with him all his staff. It was a glorious winter morning with a sharp frost ; there was not a cloud in the blue sky and in the distance we were able to pick out the smallest clefts and crevices in the mountains. We first drove in a *tonga* or native cart to the foot of the Ak pass, where horses awaited us. We then rode slowly to the *caravanserai* which lay on the near side of the pass, where everything was arranged for us and when a little later the Governor arrived with his troop, we partook of breakfast. We all sat down on *kelims* which had been spread out on the ground, and were offered large dishes of mutton which, with salt and bread, tasted very good. The usual hot tea was not omitted, and it was not till noon that we continued our journey.

The air was beautifully clear and fresh ; I remained with Blaich behind the caravan and we were thus able to enjoy the scene without being disturbed. The climb up the pass was strenuous and the animals often stopped to rest. When we reached the summit we had a distant panorama

of the snow-capped mountains of the Hindu Kush, and the road leading to the water-shed of the Indar-ab. The Governor and the *Shikar Sahib* had frequent shots at the red grouse as they perched on the rocks. The Pole, Blaich and myself again remained behind the caravan. Hour after hour passed and even at seven o'clock there was no rest house in sight. The sun had already sunk behind the hills in the west and blue shadows were gradually creeping across the expanse of snow. We noticed at once when waves of cold air swept over the land, and turned up our coat collars, burying our hands in our pockets. At last we sighted the *caravanserai* of Suhtechinar, meaning burnt plane trees, and were glad to be able to dismount.

We continued our journey the next day to Baiani, the way at times leading through narrow valleys and gorges. The bare rocks towered up on both sides and I was able to make some interesting geological observations. Some of the loose stones were covered with a layer of conglomerate deposits, proving that at one time a vast quantity of water flowed through this valley. As we neared the village of Baiani the inhabitants streamed out in crowds to greet us with cheers, for the news that the Governor of Bamian was coming had spread like wildfire. Just outside Baiani we reached the first coal mines which were insignificant and in disuse. At midday it became warm and I was told that it rarely snows in these sheltered valleys. Baiani is a small village and it seemed that the inhabitants had never seen a European before, for they stared at us as if we were freaks. After lunch I again set off with Blaich, the

Governor giving us a soldier to escort us who knew the district.

Rarely have I seen such variety of colours among mountains. The lower valley slopes were composed of brick-red sandstone, producing the most fantastic broken shapes. We followed up one of these gorges cut out of red rocks which, later, became so narrow that it was impossible to proceed. High above us were grey, chalky, bare rocks, still covered by a few flakes of snow. We discovered a large cave, out of which flew a number of red grouse towards us. They were probably nesting there and we had disturbed their peace. We then rejoined the main gorge, our way leading into a side valley, where we stayed till the sun sank below the horizon. It was a magnificent wild mountain scene which lay before us and never shall I forget the colours that the setting sun produced on the ragged rocks. One group, under which was a greenish coloured slate substratum, turned a fiery red, while the other colours varied according to the light. Gradually the sun sank, the shadows turning blue in the valley, and as twilight came, we turned back to Baiani. Our camp chairs had been placed in front of our quarters and we sat till dinner was ready in the flickering light of the fire watching the Afghans prepare the evening meal. Some stood about in groups, talking quietly about us and now and then throwing a distrustful look towards us. The inhabitants did not appear to be overjoyed at our visit, for they disliked being disturbed and felt that their peace and isolation were being threatened.

The next morning we proceeded to Doab-i-Mekhzarin. The river down-stream has here cut a deep gorge through the granite rocks which are perpendicular on either side. We frequently had to ford the river and at times had difficulty in making the horses wade through the icy water. We saw many red grouse and our keen sportsmen were continually having shots at them. The whole caravan had then to stop while the hunters crept like cats behind rocks in order to get as near as possible to the place where the birds had been sighted. In spite of these precautions however, they often missed their aim. It was a desolate country, but wilder and grander than the central part of the Hazara Highlands. The gigantic walls of rock here were to me a continual source of wonder, making one feel small and insignificant compared with the vast forces of nature which have been and still are at work giving the hills their shape and form. We found whole mountains pushed on top of others, and cracks formed through which rivers have precipitated themselves, thus carving out gorges. In one place in the middle of the gorge we found traces which showed us the vast amount of work the river has done.

About two o'clock we arrived in the small valley of Doab, where we had a meal, and then proceeded to reconnoitre the countryside. Taking a native as guide, we worked our way down-stream, where the river is wide and divided up into small channels, flowing in a wide valley. A piercing east wind was blowing against us and the native's turban became unwound, flapping in the wind like a white pennant. To the north the river was hemmed

in by a fantastic array of broken rocks which, in spite of our attempts, we were unable to reach. We soon turned back and tried to enter this region direct from Doab, northwards, which we succeeded in doing as there was a small dried-up gorge leading there. The gorge had been cut out of dark red sandstone rocks where we found several fossilized stones, which were, however, very hard to cut out. When we had climbed out of the gorge we were rewarded by a glorious sight of the high fissured chalk cliff lit up by the setting sun. A few small white clouds floated, like fleece, down to the green slate and dark red stones. The ground round us looked as though it had been burnt, with not a patch of green, and one sank over one's ankles into the loose cinders and lava. A deep peace lay over these wild mountains. Through our field-glasses we searched the high chalky cliffs to the north and noticed, on the highest peak, a few wild goats, but unfortunately we had no good gun with us.

The scenery, the following day, was especially wonderful. We first went upstream and took the same route that Blaich and I had taken the previous day. The weather was fine, the sky a clear blue with not a single cloud. We turned into a small side valley and towards noon came to a crystal-clear stream where we halted for our midday rest. We tied the horses to the bushes which overhung the stream, the *kelims* were spread out on the ground and a fire was lit. Rarely before had a picnic been so pleasant as this one was in the wilds of mountains of the Hindu Kush. There was hot tea, cold game or mutton and

bread, and we could also, without fear, drink the clear water of the stream. I would willingly have spent a longer time there so that I could have made a water-colour sketch of the magnificent view, but we had to continue our journey. A fresh wind sprang up as we moved further into the heart of the mountains, which were very jagged and as brilliant as the day before. We went continually up and down slopes, at times passing through such narrow gorges that the horses with difficulty picked their way, and one had to take great care not to knock one's knees against the perpendicular rocks. We then climbed a steep ascent over a pass from which we had a view of the gorges and gullies. To the south towered the high peaks of the Hindu Kush pointing out our route ; but to the north were the steep walls of the chalk ridges. There were no signs whatsoever of vegetation nor of life. On our way over yet another pass I remained behind with Blaich and the servant of the Pole. The horses had to be resaddled, which involved a short rest. Being in the heart of this desolate rocky region was an uncanny feeling, for the country was dead and it took us many hours to cross it. Once we met a small caravan of mules, carrying large dirty grey blocks of salt to Kabul from the salt mines at Khanabad. We had a glorious outlook from the summit of the final pass, but never before have I seen such a precipitous descent into the valley. The sides of the rocks fell for hundreds of feet with apparently a sheer drop, and on the edge of this precipice ran the path leading down to the plain of Surh-ab. Thousands of small gorges

cut their way through the soft rocks here, and the products of this district are very rich. Before us rose a high ridge with a few patches of snow on the highest violet-brown peaks. Below there were groups of dark red rocks and green slates filling the valley. As the golden sun was sinking behind the rocks we came upon a few poor wretched mud huts and were greeted by hostile dogs, so that we hardly dared proceed. We saw no signs of our caravan and had no idea where it was. We rode slowly on, but the dogs jumped up at us and bit the horses' legs. This was going too far, and we ordered the inhabitants to tie up the dogs, which was done after some delay. The people were most unfriendly, possibly frightened, but at last they told us where our caravan was, and after a quarter of an hour we found it in one of the small huts of the Barfak quarter.

It was snowing the next morning, so we remained in our mud huts ; this rest was really most welcome as the previous day had been very tiring. We therefore made ourselves as comfortable as possible round the fire, wrote up our diaries, read or talked with the Afghans. The snow was falling heavily outside, the flakes being blown about, and the ground soon became quite white. The mountains were completely hidden, while the horses were a pathetic sight in the courtyard and looked as though they had been completely powdered. About noon the weather cleared and the sun came out, which quickly melted the snow. I therefore set out with Blaich and two servants to reconnoitre the countryside. After we had

ridden for a quarter of an hour in an easterly direction, we noticed on our left a small valley which was cut out of the dark red stone and was possibly a means of getting to the hills. We left the horses with the servant and proceeded on foot up the valley which gradually narrowed until we found we had reached a 'blind alley', for on all sides perpendicular, fiery-red rocks blocked our advance. We were forced to return and soon found a small footpath that entered the gorge. The servant again took charge of the horses and we again tried to penetrate into the hills. We first followed a dried-up valley before we were able to ascend. The afternoon sun was hot ; we were surrounded by impenetrable mountains, but the higher we went the further we could see and the freer we felt. I have never felt so well as I felt there where everything was unique, and where one could neither see nor hear anything human. It is only when alone with Nature that man can understand it, whether it be in the high hills or in the deserts, by the sea or in the woods. It is only when we are free from everyday life and face to face with Nature that we appreciate the greatness of the universe. It is then that we realize what harm civilization has done for us and what a sad life, on the whole, we are compelled to lead, which makes us the more thankful when we are able to escape and become true men, finding inspiration once more in Nature.

We again reconnoitred this district on the following day, providing one of the servants with a ruck-sack filled with provisions as we were starting at ten o'clock.

We followed the gorge and the narrow path up the ravine, where we found a large number of fossilized stones, which were mostly, however, only burnt lime-stones from the large chalky cliffs towering above us. Soon we reached a large snowfield extending over the northern slopes of the hills, and here we halted on a low summit ; the carrier, however, was still a long way behind. We had pushed on fairly fast and were then resting at the edge of a plateau, the sides of which rose up perpendicularly. We succeeded in climbing a side spur on the north side, from which we had a wonderful view, embracing the whole of the Hindu Kush mountains. Here we remained for about two hours, until the carrier arrived with our provisions. Later we reconnoitred the immediate neighbourhood, took topographical photo-graphs, sketched and collected geological specimens. To the south rose the main chain of the Hindu Kush with its numerous snow-capped peaks, but we missed here the Alpine forms in spite of the height of these hills, some of which are over 15,000 feet high. There are no glaciers nor are there *kares*. These hills have really more the character of foot-hills, and far below us we saw part of the valley bed in which Barfak lies. We climbed the green slaty rocks to the north, but further in the distance we saw still higher snow-covered mountains which, according to their form, seemed to be composed of granite. I was not able, from the map, to discover what these hills actually were. There was no sign of life ; not even a bird of prey circled round the high peaks. I had hoped

to have learned some of the names of the hills from our guide, but he knew nothing. We erected a small mound of stones on the saddle of a hill so that we could later, with the help of our field-glasses, locate the place from the valley. Far in the west rose still higher three-toothed peaks, like three snow pyramids placed side by side.

When the sun was going down we started to return, and found our servant waiting for us in the valley with the horses. We rode on yet further to the village of Tala, which lies in a beautiful large plain. Between Tala and Barfak, the river has cut its way by a deep gorge through the mountains. Blaich and I tried to penetrate into the ravine, but found it impossible. The stones everywhere were of volcanic origin, porphyry, trachyte, and basalt, with sandstones and green slates interspersed. In some places there were small seams of coal inserted which were distinctly smouldering. Owing to the fact that the coal was impregnated with sulphur, everything smelt of that and carbon dioxide, and in some places even white steam was issuing from the rocks, and the whole ground looked as though it had been scorched. It was almost dark as we entered our camp, and were glad that the courteous Governor had already caused our evening meal to be prepared.

When we woke the next day, we found that it was snowing once again. Thick grey clouds covered the hillsides and we were forced to stay at home. We were visited that morning by a singer who was anxious to demonstrate his powers to the Governor. I have often noticed that

Afghans close their eyes when singing. One has the involuntary impression that they lose themselves entirely in their song which, however, is rather monotonous and, after any length of time, sends one to sleep. It had stopped snowing about noon, so we saddled the horses and set off again to reconnoitre. We once again rode into the Surh-ah gorge and collected more geological specimens. It was damp and cold and the gloomy limestone rocky walls seemed even more desolate. We could not see many of the high peaks as dark clouds enveloped the tops.

The next morning we prepared for our return journey. The weather had not quite cleared and clouds were still hovering over the foot-hills. At first, however, we made good progress, but the crossing of the Chak pass was, all the same, very strenuous. Owing to snow and the steep ascent the animals slipped and we had to take care that they did not fall over the side into the depths below. We had a glorious view from the summit of the pass. About noon the weather cleared and we reached Doab again in sunshine. I had remained behind with Blaich when, just before reaching Doab, we passed a few mud huts. Suddenly two large dogs burst out and bit our horses' legs, causing them to shy. The Afghan dogs are a kind of mastiff, short-haired and very strongly built, with large heads. They are, however, extraordinarily good watch-dogs. If one arrived late in the village and were still ten minutes distant, the dogs would know that a stranger was approaching and would begin to bark and give the alarm. It always gave an

uneasy feeling, especially when it was pitch dark and one could not recognize anything. Very often one could not keep the dogs off by throwing stones at them even in daytime, but at night one was only able to clear the way by the use of a riding whip. The Afghans treated their dogs badly, and I used to pity the poor animals when they were badly kicked. I frequently heard the painful cries of dogs and saw them limping about with broken legs. It was not surprising, therefore, that these animals would attach themselves to Europeans who never harm them, while they would bark at every Afghan.

On leaving Doab-i-Mekhzarin we wanted to follow the Bamian river which between Doab and Schumhul has cut a deep gorge through the main chain of the Hindu Kush. No other river has done this, and that this part had never before been visited by a European filled me with an insatiable desire to explore it. Even in my student days the problem of these gorges had always attracted me, and in my work on Tibet and the Himalayas I have thoroughly discussed these questions. It was therefore a great pleasure to me to be able to study at first hand a gorge running through one of the greatest mountain ranges in the world.

We left Doab-i-Mekhzarin on January 21st in beautiful weather, going upstream until we turned off into a side valley through which the Bamian river flows from the hills. The narrow valley was very picturesque, the river being bordered with undergrowth and willows and in places reeds grew to the height of a man which,

were yellow and dried up and rustled as we rode through them. Occasionally we had to cross the river because the rocks came down perpendicularly. The water, roaring as it went, hurled itself over the large granite blocks, and we often had to look to our horses to prevent them from stumbling. This nearly happened to the horse of the *Shikar Sahib*, which would have fallen if he had not at the last minute pulled the rein hard. After we had ridden for about three hours the gorge became so narrow that the river flowed literally between two perpendicular walls. The rocks also were fissured and large blocks, in fact, loose broken pieces of rock hung wedged between the walls of the gorge. We had therefore to leave the river and push over a lateral pass into another small, sheltered valley, in which were situated the small mud huts of Bagrak. We had never reached our camp as early as this before, but I was very pleased as I was then able to reconnoitre the neighbourhood. At lunch we had good bread, which we likewise found the next day in Ghandak. Nowhere in Afghanistan have I eaten such good bread as I ate in the heart of the Hindu Kush.

We were again given a soldier to escort us on our way, and Blaich and I then set out. On the northern slopes the snow lay fairly deep. We followed a small side valley again which brought us quickly to the higher plateau. The final ascent was fairly steep and we often had to rest in order to regain our breath. Blaich thought at one place that he saw a wolf, but it appeared to vanish down a small side ravine. Slowly we scrambled over the snow-covered

plateau to the edge of the gorge, but found that the animal was only a block of granite. We waited for a quarter of an hour, but nothing stirred, and we had once again taken the gun with us for no purpose. We saw, however, the tracks of wolves in the snow, and would have loved to have experienced a real adventure. Life in this country is not so dangerous as one imagines. Many of us when reading a book on Afghanistan would expect to find at least one or two stories of robbers, but as a rule one can travel for years in that country without having a hair of one's head touched. There are certain districts which are not so safe as others, such as, for example, Kafiristan and the neighbourhood of Ghazni and Kandahar ; but, generally speaking, the conditions are much better than in earlier times when every book on Afghanistan was full of stories of robbers. We explored the plateau and I was able to make a good reconnaissance of the morphological conditions, but I have gone throughly into these scientific questions elsewhere. From the plateau we climbed the steep, rough hillsides which drop down into the Bagraker valley ; it cost us much energy and we had to go extremely cautiously. We had been away from the camp for so long that they had already begun to look and shout for us.

The following day was perhaps the most interesting one on our trip, for we crossed the main chain of the Hindu Kush mountains. We rose early, to find the sky overcast and a cold wind blowing in our faces. The caravan slowly climbed by a side valley on to the high

plateau where we had been the previous afternoon. The landscape was very depressing and bare, with not a speck of green, and even the short brushwood was yellow and dried up so that it rustled when the animals trod on it. The hills wore a heavy and gloomy air, so different from the day before when the rays of the setting sun had shone on the snowy hillsides. In one place we saw a hare hiding behind a bush and our eager sportsmen again developed a mania for shooting, but as usual missed, the hare with leaps and bounds vanishing over the side of the hill. The way down seemed endless as we again approached the river, whose roaring and rumbling we had heard from afar. It was a precarious descent for we had some six hundred feet to go and the path was extremely dangerous. We descended step by step until we finally reached the gorge, where the caravan divided up ; Blaich, the Pole, the Michmandar, the *Shikar Sahib* and I rode into the gorge, while the others followed the river down until the next camp was reached. We rode for about half an hour, the sides of the gorge closing in more and more, while the roaring of the water grew even louder until we were unable even to hear ourselves calling to one another. At last we had to turn back, as the way was blocked by rocks, and we rode slowly through the gorge and narrow valleys of the Bamian river. Again and again we had to cross the river, the icy cold water nearly reaching to the horses' girths. The brink of the river was ice-bound and we often had to cut through it before we could cross, the animals occasionally stumbling and

breaking through the ice. Then again we would have to climb the steep sides of rocks and it was wonderful that the horses were able to obtain a grip at all. Once Michmandar's horse slipped, but fortunately rolled down a slope that was not very steep and, as luck would have it, the rider managed to free himself at once from the stirrups, so that only his foot was slightly crushed.

When we came to Jilmish we refreshed ourselves with tea and bread, after which we pushed on to Ghandak. Black slate rocks, in parts very disintegrated, deceived us into thinking we had found coal. As the valley widened we again had a glorious sight of the high snowy peaks. There was great excitement in Ghandak when we arrived ; a visit from so many people, and white men at that, had never been known in this lonely mountain district, and the inhabitants had never before seen a European. While we were lying on our camp beds round the fire eating our dinner in the depressing hut where we were staying, a few old grey-beards came and sat down, staring at us fixedly without saying a word. We learned that evening that a horse had fallen into the river and we were rather afraid it was one of our pack animals. However, we were in luck, as our things arrived safe and dry. It was the horse of the Michmandar, and he pulled a long face next day because his magnificent wool-lined coat had been completely ruined by the water and had become stiff.

It was late next day before we were able to depart, for the loading of the animals took an endless time and it was not till ten o'clock that we were under way. It was a beautiful

day and the air was pure and clear. What a difference it makes when the sun shines ; everyone is happy and cheerful and one realizes the pleasure it gives to travel through this mountainous region in the sunshine. We often had to cross the river, which in places was fairly deep. A servant used to be sent on ahead to find the best place, and even though we lifted our legs as high as possible, our boots often became wet. The horses had to fight with all their force against the strong current and we were glad when the other side was safely reached. Again we had to go over steep rocks without a trace of a path ; in one place we crept on all fours along the slopes composed of loose slates, while the river raced below us. I was surprised at the horses, who, even at the most dangerous places, moved along with great skill and safety. The gorge grew so narrow at times that the river practically filled the bottom, while both sides rose up perpendicularly for hundreds of feet, and only occasionally could we see the high snowy peaks. As we were nearing the end of the gorge—or rather the beginning—we saw the ruins of an old town perched on the slopes of the rocks. There were mighty walls, the remains of arches, gateways and castles standing out against the blue sky. We unfortunately had no time to inspect it closer, but I have often been sorry that I did not devote a few hours to the examination of those old ruins. It is only later, while writing one's diary, that one realizes what one ought to have visited. When we arrived at the end of the gorge at midday and again came to the wide upper valley of the Bamian river,

running east and west, the Governor left us. He had vanished out of sight behind the hills as we were crossing the Shibar pass. It was beautifully warm in the midday sun and one could scarcely believe that we were in the month of January. That evening in Schumbul it turned bitterly cold, and we drew nearer than usual round the camp fire. Outside the full moon poured its pale silvery light over the snow-covered mountains which were wrapped in deepest silence.

We set off early the next day as it was necessary to cross the Shibar pass again to come to Kasi Besi. It was a clear, brisk winter's day and we were compelled to walk most of the way, as otherwise we would have been frozen in the biting wind. Everywhere was snow, and icicles were even hanging from the manes and tails of the animals. There is a certain amount of caravan traffic here even in winter, as the direct route from Bamian to Kabul over the Hajigak pass is blocked with snow. A small black donkey had collapsed under the weight of its load and blinked sadly at us with its dark eyes as we rode past. A few riders rushed at full tilt over the snowfield while the camel caravans dragged their way slowly through the white-capped mountains. On the summit of the pass were a few shelter huts for travellers ; we lit a fire out in the open, drank some tea and had breakfast. The mountains around us were glorious, the dazzling white stretches of snow shining in the sun. The path leading down to Kasi Besé was covered with ice in many places, so that we had to lead the horses the whole way, the frozen parts of

the path being sprinkled with sand and gravel. At Kasi Besi a motor car was waiting for us which took us on that day as far as Siah Gird.

We spent two whole days in this village as we had to give an opinion as to the possibilities of finding coal in the neighbourhood. We went on foot to one of the seams which was not far away, as on the first day we were unable to get hold of any horses. The whole valley between the Paghman and Hindu Kush ranges in earlier times must have been filled by a bog, as everywhere we came across sandstones and marl, interspersed with thin seams of coal. At a later date, in fairly recent times, the whole of this district must have undergone a severe disturbance. On these few grey coloured deposits lay the deep red sandstones and conglomerates of the recent tertiary period. We also found the ruins of an old mud stronghold which had been built out of red sandstone. All the streams and rivers were full of dark red water, which undoubtedly is caused by the iron from the old limestones which extend to the southern slopes of the Hindu Kush. In the valley itself there are one or two large newly-formed terraces on which ruins stand.

Our visit to Gaoparan in the Paghman chain was more interesting. We again rode through the small valley which we had visited before and followed it up slowly in a southerly direction, always climbing. This district is very fertile ; everywhere along the banks of the streams that flow down from these mountains are gardens and plantations. The slopes were beautifully watered, and the

apricots, apples and grapes from the Ghorband valley are celebrated far and wide for their excellence. We paid a visit to the District Commissioner at Gaoparan, and were given beautiful fruit and the never-failing green tea, which is drunk out of small bowls, both of which are manufactured in Russia. This high official was not very courteous, and it was a long time before fresh horses were placed at my disposal. We then pushed on further into the mountains and came to a snowfield. The weather was beautifully sunny with no wind, and we had a glorious view of the high mountains. We did not meet a soul after leaving Gaoparan. The coal was clearly poor and appeared in the form of small, thin, disordered seams. We spent some considerable time here, and in the afternoon turned back to Gaoparan. The small village lies like a robber's haunt among the hills, the houses being built on the slopes. I saw some good-looking faces among the inhabitants, especially among the small girls who, in spite of their filthiness, were pretty. We stayed here for a little while and set out for home late in the afternoon. When the sun was setting the snowfields were touched with a rose so soft and harmonious that the snowy peaks mingled with the roseate hues of the evening sky. The blue shadows crept higher and higher until darkness covered the valley. It was quite dark when eventually we again reached Siah Gird.

The following day we went off to Shebel-es-Seradash. The path was blocked by rocks in many places and frequently we had to stop in order to clear them away. About

noon we reached the village and were quartered in the Governor's house; we had a wonderful view from the terrace of the Palace. Below us to our right we saw the roaring Ghorband river, and to our left the Panjsher, while surrounding us were the high hills. To the south-east rose the high rocky peaks of Kafiristan, among which only two Englishmen have ever penetrated—McNair in about 1883 and Robertson in 1889. The country is said to be so wild and rough that one cannot pass through with a caravan, and it appears one must take porters.

The literature on this country is full of contradictions. Some of the descriptions say that the Kafirs are a cheerful race and friendly towards Europeans, while other reports say that they are as wild a tribe of robbers as one can imagine. The Kafirs themselves say they are descendants of the old Greeks. Holdich—one of the best authorities on Afghanistan—believes that the Kamdesh-Kafirs are descendants of the old Nysaeer who, as peasants and missionaries, welcomed Alexander the Great on his way to India. The Kafirs are divided into several tribes, speaking several different dialects, and fight amongst one another in the same way that the tribes on the Indian-Afghan frontier do. Until the time when the Amir Abdur Rahman, brought his missionary campaign, no other Mohammedan conqueror—except perhaps Timur—had ever tried to subdue the country. The Kafirs are feared to this day and no one living on the borders of Kafiristan, called Nuristan, or the land enlightened by religion, is safe from their marauding bands. The inhabitants around

the Panjsher river are likewise feared ; this district has still a certain independence of its own, as the power and influence of the Kabul Government is very small here.

At Shebel-es-Seradash we climbed the northerly slopes of the Iron mountains, which are composed of limestones and many red iron lodes, and were able to see the Safed Koh mountains at Jalalabad which rose like a white jagged wall to the south. The great wide valley extending from the Hindu Kush to Kabul, and known by the name of Koh-i-Daman and which I consider to be a crumbling basin filled with lacustrine and fluvial deposits, is now well irrigated and very fertile. From the sides of the hills surrounding the plain, banks of deposits have forced themselves into the valley where the mud villages of Istalif, Deb-i-nao and Istargij were hidden away in among mulberry and apricot groves. I later took from Shebel-es-Seradash a ride to Gul Bahar which lies on the banks of the Panjsher river, the river being bordered by fine old mulberry trees and the villages lying close together. In earlier times the Panjsher river must have flowed at a higher level, as there are old terraces on either side on which the villages are situated. We also caught a glimpse of the gorge through which the Panjsher flows through the Hindu Kush mountains. The majority of the mountains were free from snow, but the main chain that we could see in the background was literally a sea of snowy peaks. At the entrance to the gorge, on the other side of Gul Bahar, lies a robbers' stronghold built into the rocks. The

floods which rush through this valley carrying everything before them must be gigantic.

It is quite certain that the district between Shebel-es-Seradash and Charikar has been inhabited since earliest times, as it is a centre point for all caravan routes : eastwards from Panjsher to Chawak, westwards from Bamian to Ghorband, to the north are the passes over the Hindu Kush, while to the south is the route from Kabul all of which meet here. Whether Alexander the Great laid the foundations of Alexandria in this neighbourhood is uncertain. Many historians conjecture that the town lay in the Begram valley south-east of Charikar, as many coins have been found there dating back to the old Greek-Bactrian times ; and Buddhist remains of olden times are also said to have been dug up. The Koh-i-Daman valley with the Ghorband valley is one of the most fertile parts of Afghanistan. Travelling from Shebel-es-Seradash to Kabul, one passes village after village, garden after garden, while on both sides rise the lofty and picturesque, but barren, hills.

The weather was bitterly cold with a biting wind when we again arrived in Kabul, and we were glad to feel that we should soon be able to greet India's sunny plains. A steamer had arrived in Karachi, during January, with large consignments for us, so one of us had to go to India in order to see to the loading up of our goods in Peshawar, *en route* for Kabul. There were two cars in the hold which had to be adjusted, and Blaich therefore, who was responsible for all matters connected with cars, went with me.

CHAPTER XII

AFGHANISTAN TO INDIA BY CAR

WEEKS went by, but at length it was time for us to prepare for our journey to India. On the morning of March 18th we were finally ready to start, and at half-past seven, as it was just beginning to get light, the hired car drew up in front of the house. The sky was cloudy, and not a soul was to be seen as we drove through the sleepy street. It was very peaceful, and only the distant roaring of the Kabul river could be heard. Soon we had left the town and the gardens behind us and were driving in a westerly direction towards the hills. Now and then we met Afghans hurrying to the town, and also the slow-moving camel caravans. At Khurd Kabul we came to a small blue-green lake which had been dammed up, lying like a polished turquoise in the midst of the disintegrated and sharp slate mountains, the summits of which were still covered with snow. We walked for a few minutes while the car filled up with petrol, and then pushed on further towards the hills. We climbed higher and higher, until at last we reached the summit of the Haft pass, 9000 feet high, where we had a wonderful view of the high Paghman mountains and the wild district of Kafiristan. The air here was not very clear, and it

seemed as though a thin veil covered the deep valleys. The path wound upwards, the bends at times being extremely sharp. In one place the rough hillsides were covered with dark green bushes, and often a real meadow in the valley caught our eye. The chauffeur had shut off the engine as we were able to run down the steep descent in neutral. We met several caravans, and it took a long time before we succeeded in passing them. What generally happened was that the animals tore themselves apart, loads fell off on to the ground, and the camel drivers cursed and swore and glared at us.

We slowly descended to Jagdalik and Surkh-pul ; it was in these valleys that the last remnants of the Anglo-Indian army were massacred in 1841 by the Afghans. The hardships of this retreat must have been dreadful ; it was in the midst of winter, in fearful cold and deep snow, that the army, under the severe attack of the Ghilzais, from the heights, had to make their retreat. Hundreds and thousands surrounded them ; frozen and suffering from hunger they were cut down or shot by the Afghans. Only a single unfortunate survivor was left alive to tell the tale.

At Surkh-pul we passed a big red bridge and halted by the wayside where there were a few booths. An old, persistent beggar in tattered clothes refused to leave us, while some pretty children standing round fingered the car and stared at us. We then crossed a sandy pass to the Ghandamak plateau where in 1879 peace parleys between the English and the Afghans took place. Later on we

descended into the Jalalabad plain. A dark, green cyprus grove, in which lay a small bungalow, was the village of Nimla. To the south rose the snow-covered Safed Koh, whose lower slopes were covered with pine trees—the only wood that I saw in the whole of Afghanistan. The vegetation became richer and richer, and the blue-green network of leaves stood out sharply against the soft green of the meadows and fields. We drove along the high *chaussée* overhung by tamarisk trees, and about four o'clock we reached the town. Children were playing on the edge of the street, having decorated themselves with flowers. We had left the winter conditions of Kabul and had come into summer. At half-past five we reached Jalalabad and were put up in the summer palace, the Bagh-i-Shah. The whole of Jalalabad was a luxurious oasis ; high tamarisk trees shaded the large, well-cared-for alleys and avenues. Everywhere were gardens and gardens and the smell of flowers was overwhelming.

In the evening we sat on the terrace and looked out on to a small artificial lake below us. There was hardly a sound, only the soft chirping of the cicadas and the splashing of the small springs. The air was sultry and still, so that the smoke of our cigarettes remained motionless in the air. Before it became dark I made a few sketches. The pale moon then rose, and in front of us by the lake a gigantic palm rose sharply against the blue, star-covered evening sky. Tall cyprus trees stood like sentries by the lake side, while white roses gleamed in the darkness of the bushes, and the scent of

thousands of buds in the garden lay heavily on the air. We remained here for a long while, and rarely did anyone speak, for one lost oneself in dreams. After our time in Kabul this seemed like magic to us, but unfortunately the next day we had to push on to India.

During the First Afghan War, Jalalabad played an important rôle, for an English brigade, under General Sale, had entrenched itself here. When one reads the reports of those unlucky days of January, 1842, one can picture the awful doubt and anxiety of the few officers who formed the Jalalabad garrison about their comrades who had remained behind in Kabul and the rest of the army. Slowly we came to realize what a dreadful mishap befell the army. On January 13th the Legation was due to arrive. They were working on the ramparts when, in the street that leads to Kabul, a solitary rider was seen approaching, riding slowly along, worn out, as though he and his horse would collapse from sheer weakness. All were seized with terror, this rider looked like death itself. They were right, for he was the only man who could tell the tale of the massacre of the army. The wounded, exhausted, half-dead man was brought into the fort. He was Dr. Brydon, and he told how he was the only survivor of an army of 16,000 men. When one sees the flower gardens in Jalalabad to-day and drinks in the peace and quietness that lies over this small paradise-like oasis and fertile plain, one cannot realize the tragedy that once cast its shadow on this valley. In the neighbourhood of the Bagh-i-Shah stands the winter palace of the Amir,

in the midst of most beautiful gardens, and not far off is the place where, on February 20th, 1919, the father of the present King, Habib Ullah, was murdered.

We set off early from Jalalabad, and soon left behind the gardens and fields, coming once again to true Afghan landscape, where the eye cannot see a speck of green. The road was poor and we could only drive slowly ; the river beds were practically dried up, which was fortunate for us as the bridges were bad and sometimes destroyed. Now and again we came across small troops of Mohmands. The women and girls do not go veiled and I often saw pretty-faced, dark-eyed girls, dressed in deep black, flowing, pyjama-like garments, with small ornaments in their hair. It was a dreary sight to see how the hills composed of slate and gneiss had been scorched by the sun. We drove on further through a wide, sandy plain strewn with large boulders where the wheels of the car sank into deep ruts so that we could only progress slowly. It was warm and very sultry, but the whole countryside was bathed in soft and delicate hues. The hills to the north of the Kabul river seemed to shimmer in pale lilac, the river, like a silver band, threading its way through the green fertile plain of Lalpura. We reached Dakka at last ; down by the river, in the middle of a small copse was the watch-house where our passes were examined. We were offered tea and fruit, and then proceeded on to the Khyber pass. Between Dakka and the Khyber pass we did not meet a soul, the journey lasting about twenty minutes. The mountains are rough and barren,

and one realized how difficult warfare must be in this country. The merciless sun beat down on us, and the air seemed to quiver over the bare rocks. We passed two small, deserted mud huts, and then re-entered the hills, and soon saw the summit of the Khyber pass high above us on a pinnacle. At the Frontier barbed wire was stretched across the road, and there was a large notice board, on which was written : ' It is absolutely forbidden to cross the border into Afghan territory.'

High up on our left on the hill slopes stood a few houses where the Afghan sentries on outpost duty are stationed. One of them came down, looked at our passes again, and eventually allowed us to proceed. We soon came to the first big English cantonment—Lundi Khana—after which we continued to climb until we had a glimpse of Ali Mesjid. The roads were mostly macadamized and were only open to vehicular traffic ; the caravans following the valley, along which a path has been made for them. This route gives one a good idea of life on these large caravan highways which connect India with the neighbouring countries. The pass is only open to caravans on two days in the week. Again and again one saw the nomads with all their goods and chattels returning through these desolate mountain regions to Central Asia, all of them on foot. The women, wrapped in black or dark blue clothes carried heavy bundles on their heads or drove the animals along with sticks. Young girls clad in rags, but as beautiful as gipsies ; lads and grey-beards walked ahead of the caravans. Often, on one of the large camels, one saw

small children perched, looking anxiously down on to the world and keeping the chickens and hens company, who likewise make the long journey on this lofty seat. The road soon wound down to the Indian plains, over which lay a grey mist. At Jamrud Fort we were greeted by the Union Jack, and once again our passes were examined. At midday, in the scorching sun, after another hour's driving, we reached Peshawar.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CITY OF PESHAWAR

Our first days in Peshawar were a real holiday after the life that we had led in Kabul. We were given a pretty, large room in the hotel with a bathroom, and the service left nothing to be desired. The food was excellent and it was only then that we realized how simply we had been living in Kabul. In the mornings at eight o'clock the boy brought us *chota hazri*, the Indian small breakfast, consisting of tea, toast and fruit. After breakfast, when we had read the papers and our mail, we used to take a *tonga*, or native cart, for a drive to the town in order to do our necessary business, which consisted of declaring certain goods, repacking boxes and bargaining with camel drivers. The road from Dean's Hotel to the 'city', as the natives call it, runs along the railway line. The railway here divides two worlds ; on one side lies the cantonment—the European quarter, and on the other, the native city. The English perhaps understand, as no other nation does, how to make a pretty and comfortable home in spite of difficult conditions. Every bungalow is a small castle in itself and is like a jewel set in the green of the trees, in the midst of innumerable masses of flowers.

Everywhere is the spirit of the English proverb : ' My home is my castle.'

I often compared the conditions in India and Russia, the difference between the Punjab and Russian-Turkestan and between Peshawar and Kushk. Here in India were order and cleanliness, and even in the smaller towns we saw the influence of the English, for England has given to India peace and safety. Anyone who knows anything of the history of India must concede this. If England left India to-day chaos would follow. The differences between the Mohammedans and the Hindus are so vast that they could never work together in order to rule as one. The Indians know that only too well, but some of them will not admit it. There are important men, such as Tagore, who are of the opinion that they are neither ready nor fit to rule themselves at the present time. They are afraid of the large masses and only a strong hand can hold together this gigantic Empire, which India is too weak to do. That Turkestan compares badly with India, no one will be surprised to hear who knows the work and conditions of the Russians and the English. The Englishman is the practical man, the great road-builder, the great irrigation engineer, for whom no difficulties are too hard to overcome and no people too hostile to subdue—in short, the one man who recognizes no obstacle. The Englishman, once he undertakes a thing, carries it through in a thoroughly sound manner. I need only refer to the large motor highways which cross the Punjab and compare them with the roads in Turkestan, or I need only compare

the train from Merv to Kushk and that which runs from Peshawar to the Khyber pass. The Englishmen are a gentlemanly race, unconscious of their colour and who will remain unconscious, always knowing how far to go with native races. The Russian, on the other hand, is half Asiatic, and even in Moscow, Asia begins. He is easily satisfied and we Western Europeans could never endure the conditions under which he lives. Our ideals would die ; the joy of living would vanish, and the sun would cease to shine. We Germans are, like Englishmen, more used to good order, cleanliness and a particular well-being, and we could not live in gloomy rooms in which there is no light and without the sun being able to penetrate.

The nearer we came to the native town, the more life we saw. Large two-wheeled oxen carts rambled along slowly over the dusty red streets. Indian bulls well-groomed, with gilded horns, were pulling small carts, and donkey caravans trotted past. Under the great shadow-givers, the mango and banana trees, were seated men smoking *huqqas*, drinking tea or sleeping. The sun's rays fell through the foliage of the trees casting bright patches on the red surface of the ground. By the side of the road were the water buffaloes, some of them standing motionless in water as though sleeping while others had only their heads emerging from the dirty mire. The entrance to the city is by the Edward Gate, where there are rows and rows of stalls, all of them open as we see them in our own markets at home. The crush was colossal and our driver had to be continually ringing and shrieking

in order to make way through the crowd. On all this shone the sun, the blue sky looking down on to these coloured scenes of life. At every cross-road was a native policeman in a grey-green uniform and a blue-red turban, controlling the traffic. One also saw in the bazaar pretty Indian women, especially those belonging to the frontier tribes. The alley-ways were often so narrow that one could only just drive through in the cart, and if two carts met, one of them had to go back until a side street was reached up which it could turn, so that the other could pass. From the roofs of the houses one had a wonderful view of the surrounding mountains, especially in the mornings when the air was clear and fresh. Like a sharp, white line to the north we saw the high mountains on the horizon ; we could not see the main range of the Himalayas, but the view of the Mohmand hills was very impressive. The colours were wonderfully soft and harmonious, rocks gleaming like purple veils crowned with white snow-tops.

The Zoological Gardens, close to the city, are more famous for their surroundings than for the animals. It was most pleasant here in the mornings or in the evenings, for the gardens are very well cared for and the flowers are indescribably beautiful. There were several arbours overgrown with creeping, deep violet clematis in bloom, while the young palm shoots were just appearing in their yellow-green dress. The fascination of tropical vegetation lies without doubt in the variety of shapes and colours. All shades of green exist, from the brightest yellow-green

to the soft blue-green of the tamarisks, through which the black stems pushed their way, and against which the deep red soil formed a great contrast.

One day we undertook a long motor trip through the Zoological Gardens to the Kabul river. A large number of irrigation canals flow from the main river, which we crossed by a pontoon bridge. The water was like pea soup, of a yellow-brown colour, and the current was very strong. One had a wonderful view of the broad Peshawar plain surrounded by a chain of high hills. The mountains in the west were free from snow, barren and rocky, and gleamed in a reddish-brown colour in the afternoon sun. We drove close by Chakdarra Fort and continued on to the frontier of the Independent Territory which is guarded by small watch towers. We crossed the Kabul river again at Michni where there is a large iron bridge over the river, and where the river flows out of a deep gorge which it has cut through the Mohmand hills. The sun sank slowly in the western horizon as the sky gradually turned a golden-red colour. Several green parrots flew out of the bushes as we passed, and small grey squirrels scampered quickly up the trees. On the way we met some nomads, Mohmands and Afridis, the women dressed completely in black. They appeared tall and proud, and their faces were very attractive, but they only remain pretty while they are young ; later they become dreadfully ugly, and one can often see real witches.

All the tribes who live on the North-West Frontier of India are robbers, who not only set themselves against the

English, but every caravan that goes through the district is in danger. They frequently carry on small warfares among themselves, for each village has its own grey, four-cornered tower, and everyone sees in his neighbour a robber. The country of these people has trained the children to rob ; it is wild, rough and hilly where, at every step, one meets with thieves. Below in the valleys are the large caravan routes, and at the foot of the hills lie, in the fertile green plains, the large towns, which with their wealth are an easy prey to marauders. What is easier than to raid them now and then and vanish with the loot into the hills ? In most cases these attacks are carried out at night and generally ten to twenty young boys collect together in order to do this. The worst robbers are the Waziris, with whom the English have had much trouble. An Englishman once asked an Afridi what his tribe would do if war broke out between Russia and England. Thereupon the old man answered : ' We would sit on our mountain pinnacles and quietly watch the war until we could see which of you would be defeated, then at the last minute we would come down from our hills and plunder the vanquished. Allah is a great person. What a wonderful time that would be for us.' A town which it is their aim to surprise is Kohat, south of Peshawar. In the year 1922 the Afghans pushed their way in, without the sentries discovering it, to the bungalow of Major Ellis who had just left, killed his wife, and dragged his beautiful, eighteen-year-old daughter into the wild gorges of Tirah. Had a punitive expedition been sent, Miss Ellis would

have been murdered. Sir John Maffey, the High Commissioner of the North-West Frontier Province, knew this and so accepted the offer of a brave Sister, Mrs. Starr, who went out into Independent Tribal Territory alone, to find Miss Ellis and bring her back to India. How she succeeded one can read in her captivating book, *Stories of Tirah and Little Tibet.* As in Afghanistan, the family blood feuds, which have lasted for generations and generations, still exist. England has now built several roads across the Independent Tribal Territory and everywhere military stations are scattered about the district. More and more the wild frontier tribes are being subdued, and it will not be long before the *Pax Britannica* will work its way into this mountainous district. Whoever has seen the work of the English officials and officers who are stationed in the North-West Frontier Province will know what has been going on here.

My stay in Peshawar was most useful as it enabled me to learn the native language—Hindustani. I engaged a good *munshi*, or teacher, who was dreadfully thin and a suitable name for him would have been the 'bone man', which had been the epithet applied to his colleague in Kabul. He wore narrow breeches and puttees, his legs being like two sticks ; otherwise he was quite well dressed. He always had a clean white turban on his head and also carried a thin riding whip in his hand, but I do not think he ever rode. His teaching pleased me, and I made good progress. Through him I also managed to get hold of many interesting works of art. I had told him that I would

buy such things and he therefore, day by day, came to offer me articles which at times were quite reasonable, but he allowed me to bargain with him.

One afternoon after a ride through the native quarter, when we were making ourselves comfortable in our bungalow, we witnessed a remarkable spectacle. We were lying, clad as lightly as possible, in large deck chairs, drinking tea and eating white rolls covered with thick yellow butter. It was a very sultry day and thick clouds were overhanging the Khyber hills, warning us of an approaching thunderstorm. Towards five o'clock I was awaiting my *munshi*, but curiously enough he did not come, so I finished my letter and left the house in order to post it. While I was writing I had heard a curious humming noise, but had not thought anything about it ; now I saw that our small verandah was being sought after by a swarm of bees. For nearly a week one swarm of small bees had settled in the cupboard which was hanging on the wall of the verandah and in which our tea things were kept, and were building day by day while we watched their work progressing. Now another swarm had arrived to contest the position of the first holders. There was naturally a bitter fight which lasted for several hours, during which I was unable to leave my room. With an obstinacy and a courage unequalled, this persevering swarm of bees tried to force an entrance into the cupboard. Again and again they essayed to penetrate through the narrow slits of the door only to be attacked by the occupants. Generally many of them would set on to one

bee, and they all would hang together until they fell to the ground where the final stages of the battle would be fought out. They hummed like a musical top and twisted one another about on the floor until the conqueror had inflicted the fatal sting on his adversary. In the evening, when the battle was over, I counted no less than eighty-five dead bees on the floor. The original swarm remained victors while the bodies were then visited by the ants, who swarmed over them. Even while the fight was going on they had been able to drag away some corpses, and now they had come for the rest, and at the end of half an hour there was not a dead bee to be found. The original swarm, however, continued to build on without concern, and the honeycombs grew bigger daily.

While in Peshawar I witnessed a heavy tropical storm. The day, May 6th, had been very sultry and I was so limp that I could scarcely stir a hand. There was not a breath of air to cool us, and the heat was worse than we had ever experienced. Thunder clouds were gathering, some black, some of a deep violet shade, and we could hear the thunder rolling in the distance and gradually coming closer. The first breeze stirred the tops of the high trees ; it was curiously quiet and oppressive. Nearer and nearer came the thunder and blue flashes appeared over the sunny hills of the Khyber. Heavy drops of rain began slowly to fall ; then followed clap after clap of thunder as the storm burst. The rain poured faster and faster as it streamed from the heavens like a wall of glass between us and the high trees in the garden so that we could only just see their

outline as they bent in the storm, the branches cracking and creaking. The red soil became soft and crimson streams flowed between the green lawns. The rain fell more and more heavily until finally came the hail. Enormous hailstones rattled unceasingly on the thin metal roof of the bungalow, sounding like machine-gun fire. Soon the paths and the lawns were quite white, and one would never have thought that one was in India in the month of May. The small orange trees which stood in the garden were stripped of foliage and the bare branches were a pathetic sight. It was thirty years since the weather in the Punjab had been so cold. Everywhere in the north-west of the Himalayas there had been heavy falls of snow, and after the thunderstorm the thermometer fell ten degrees and we became very cold. The rain had come through in several places in the bungalow, and the boy had much to do to restore order. The small *geckos* which generally climbed about the walls had crept back into the cracks. The lightning continued until the evening, outlining the high trees for a few seconds against the sulphury yellow sky.

The evenings I shall never forget. We would sit in basket chairs on the green lawn under the high trees, drinking our iced whiskies and sodas and dreaming of the future. The eternal peace and quiet around us and the magic of these tropical nights enthralled us. One could only hear the even purring of the engines of the electricity works close at hand or sometimes the distant sound of a caravan. One Sunday evening we went to an evening

service and concert in the English church. It was very beautiful, and rarely has Schubert's 'Unfinished Symphony' and Beethoven's 'Overture to Leonora' made such a deep impression on me as in Peshawar. But these happy times soon came to an end. Our most important articles were on their way to Kabul, and there was new work awaiting us there.

CHAPTER XIV

SUMMER DAYS IN KABUL

In Kabul spring had arrived quite suddenly one night in March. The clouds were torn asunder to give way to the pure blue sky, and where the sun's rays struck the ground the snow melted in a short time. For a few days the streets of the bazaar were a sea of mud which could only be crossed by stepping-stones, put there for that purpose. The soft surface was slippery and one arrived home at night covered with mud. This period of thawing, with its mud, during which our house also showed signs of crumbling, owing to the moisture, was, however, soon over and spring greeted us. The first soft green appeared, and soon the whole country-side was decked with a glorious, spring-like appearance, spreading all round the magnificence of its flowers. Where, fourteen days before, there had been snow, roses were now blossoming. I have often marvelled at the large rose bushes which have grown since earliest times. Hundreds of white buds light up the green, and their sweet, overpowering scent greeted one everywhere. The high, surrounding hills were, however, still covered with snow for a long time, and the snow on the 15,000 feet peaks

of the Paghman chain did not disappear until the autumn.

We again moved house in March before I went to Peshawar. Our landlord refused to do anything more to the house ; we were at loggerheads with him and eventually we lost our patience. One Sunday morning we moved, with all our luggage, into our new abode, the ' Enderabi ', a rival hotel which was ironically called by the Germans the ' Hotel Esplanade ', where we remained till July. I shared a room with Blaich which was much too small for all our belongings. The light filtered dimly through the small red, blue and orange-coloured window panes, making it practically impossible to work because of the bad lighting. Our best room was our reception room or ' drawing-room ', which was large, had many windows, papered walls and a big chandelier. When I returned from Peshawar, in June, our party had grown to seven, so that more rooms had had to be taken.

The summer weather with its daily blue sky and sunshine was glorious. A glance at my meteorological observations shows me that, from the beginning of June to the beginning of October, we had 105 days sunshine with not a cloud to be seen in the skies. We had a glorious view of the hills from the roof of our hotel. In front of us rose the Schere Derwaza and the Bala Hissar, crowned with its old fortifications. I climbed the latter one fine summer day ; I started off early with my newly-engaged servant, tackling it from the south side. It must have been a fine sight when the old fortifications were still standing and when it was the residence of the Amir Abdur

Rahman. Now everything lay in ruins among the broken gneiss and slate fragments which cover the hill. I lay down on a large rock and gazed over the country-side. Far below us I could see the blue band of the river, and the town, like a relief map, stretched out before us. It was difficult at first to locate buildings among the sea of flat-roofed houses. I soon, however, spotted the Post office, the Enderabi Hotel and the Foreign Office building, as well as the citadel. I systematically followed out each street and block of houses and was soon able to unravel the maze of buildings. It was nine o'clock and the rays of the sun were already fairly strong. I made a water-colour sketch of the surrounding hills which gleamed in all colours of the rainbow. It was an imposing scene, this picture of the Paghman range, with its white summits rising sharply against the pale blue sky. I stayed here for a long time, and it was only with difficulty that I forced myself to leave this beautiful, far-reaching view-point. Among the hills facing us, which have been cut through by the valley of the Kabul river, rises the Asmai. I had once climbed this hill on a dreary, grey, winter's day, when the hills and the valley had been covered with deep snow and grey mist had hung over the plain. The Asmai is lower than the Schere Derwaza, but in spite of this we had a glorious view from it. Towards eleven o'clock the heat became unbearable, and after collecting a few more geological specimens, we started off for home.

We had a busy week of work, for at the Custom-house were lying hundreds of large cases, waiting to pass the

officials. One must have patience in the East, and something even more than patience is required at the Custom-house. We usually went after lunch, the building lying in a part of the town difficult to find. There was a large door, an inner courtyard full of bales, boxes, men, camels, donkeys, horses, cars and oxen, a yelling and swearing, and such a crush that one could hardly move. We continually heard the cry of '*Khabadar, khabadar*', meaning 'Beware, beware', ringing in the dusty air. Very often the exit was blocked by camel caravans, and then followed a dreadful scene—hitting and shouting, squeezing and pushing, followed by a stampede among the animals. Now and then someone would kick, and one often heard the pitiful howling of a dog, who had got into the Custom-house by mistake and was kicked out or had stones thrown at it.

There was a special place reserved for our loads. When the examination took place the Chief of the Customs was always present. He was a very friendly gentleman and remained incredibly quiet, which is what an ideal Customs official should be. The examination was carried out carefully because the value of each article was assigned by the assessor and on this valuation the Customs duty, from 20 per cent to 200 per cent, was based, according to its kind. We naturally had many articles in our loads which were totally unknown to Afghans, some of which were assessed at an unusually high figure. A great deal of bargaining had to take place before the authorities would agree to the value which

we held to be reasonable and proper. We had a great argument one afternoon during the examination of a case containing toys. Each article was inspected and the Chief Customs Officer himself played the whole afternoon with a monkey which was beating a drum. There was great pleasure and astonishment when we wound up a small motor car and set it going on the floor. The aluminium pots and pans which had hitherto not been seen in Kabul also created a great impression. When the boxes had been passed we engaged a number of carriers, each of whom tied one of the heavy loads on to his back and proceeded in Indian file to our store-house.

It was very often unpleasant working at the Custom-house. Even when the authorities tried to make matters as easy as possible for us, it was impossible to prevent other buyers and sellers from piling up their goods near ours. It became especially unpleasant when about 50 to 100 leather sacks filled with mutton fat were placed there. In the great heat—the thermometer often rising to about 40 and 50 degrees at midday in the shade—the fat naturally turned rancid and oozed out between the seams of the sacks, running down the sides which shone as though they had been polished and gave forth a most nauseating smell.

It was interesting watching beer and spirits being passed through the Customs. This was naturally also something quite new for the Afghans, as alcohol is forbidden for Mohammedans. Each one of us received a card on which was written how much beer, whiskey, etc.,

we were allowed to consume. If a consignment arrived, the number of bottles that the individual required would be written off his allotment. We were also compelled to make a note of the person to whom the spirits had been sold, it being understood of course that we would not sell beer to Afghans. The purpose of every article on which we had to pay duty, which the Afghans had not seen before, had to be carefully explained. Nothing could pass the Customs free, except dirty clothes. Books, even pictures of relatives were liable to be taxed, and the Customs duties are certainly one of the chief sources of revenue in the country.

When the day's work was over, we generally went for a walk or paid a visit, reaching home about eight o'clock for our meal. It was always beautifully cool on the roof, and we used to sit there by the light of the stable lamp, chatting and reading. Later we would blow out the lamp and sit there by the light of the stars and moon. The servants also generally went to bed late, and for a long time we watched the red glow from the kitchen fire. They would mostly sit round the fire, chatting and smoking their *huqqa*, or sometimes Gulam, our Indian cook, who was a scholar and had travelled in Asia, would read them a story. During the hot season of the year the servants slept in the courtyard. The temperature fell at night to 25–28 degrees, and in the middle of the day it reached 38–40 degrees in the shade. At eleven o'clock every night a gun was fired, after which no one was allowed out without a lantern. Anyone caught without a lantern by

a red policeman had to spend the night at the police station, and the next morning give an account of his actions on the previous evening.

We used to sleep with our windows and doors wide open and frequently were awakened in the night to find that a cat or some other 'disturber of the night's rest had sneaked in. Sometimes in the morning the remains of the evening meal were strewn on the carpet, generally gnawed white bones. The fact that animals used my room as their nightly meeting-place and my carpet as their table-cloth used to annoy me very much. If they had been quiet and behaved in a 'gentlemanly' manner I would have closed one eye, but they even went so far as to disturb the night's rest. Lying in my camp bed, I would throw a boot at them or anything that was handy, which would result in a short period of peace. One generally ended by giving up the fight as useless, turning over on one's side and going to sleep.

In the courtyard were the chickens, our live stock, which were replenished each week. Gulam Ali used to buy a few fowls, apparently picking out those that had a loud voice. One of them was a tenor who practised only at night; as early as three o'clock he would begin crowing in a loud manner. At once a hen from a distance would reply and he would then continue in an untiring manner every minute, so that sleep was out of the question. One night just as he let forth one of his crows, having started at two o'clock, Wagner reached the end of his tether. I saw him strike a match in his room and with a

terrible curse in Persian, meaning something similar to 'son of a dog', he crashed into the dark courtyard. I next heard something strike the wall hard, either a boot or a stone. Gulam then woke and joined in the nocturnal 'chicken hunt'; the excitement being general, various servants taking part in the chase. Eventually, however, the malefactor was captured and locked up in the kitchen, and the following day it forfeited its life. We once again crept back into our camp beds, only to be reawakened at five o'clock by the piteous braying of a donkey which was tied to a tree in a neighbouring courtyard.

CHAPTER XV

TURBULENT TIMES

THERE were rumours already afloat in the spring, before I went to India, of a rising of the Mangals in Kabul, a tribe which inhabits the Khost district on the Indian frontier. There was, however, no definite information. Whilst I was in Peshawar, I used to read reports of the situation in Afghanistan, but I was unable to grasp the situation clearly. Indians and Afghans with whom I came into contact spread innumerable rumours, one of them being that a revolution had broken out in Kabul. Just then I received a telegram telling me that it would be unsafe to dispatch any caravans to Kabul, as there was danger just outside. One caravan was actually ready to start, so it was unloaded and the goods put into store again. Anxious days and weeks followed, during which we could obtain no reliable information. At one time we heard a rumour that the Ghilzai tribe had joined in the rising, whilst, at another, that the Waziris had gone over to the Amir's side. Neither of these of course was true. There was one rumour, however, which continually reached us ; this was that Abdul Kerim, who was against the Amir, had incited the tribes living between Ghazin

and the Indian frontier to attack the Amir, Amanullah Khan. That there was trouble somewhere we knew, because the post was often delayed and telegraphic communication ceased for several days at a time.

Eventually I returned to Kabul at the beginning of June to find peace reigning, and we were informed that the war was over. The soldiers returned decorated with flowers, and the whole population received a small present of money and a coloured silk cloth from the Amir. The crowds then became even worse in the bazaar ; people gathered round the soldiers to hear first-hand information about the war in Jenk, and wonderful were the stories told. Returning one evening, I found a soldier sitting on one of the servants' beds. I passed by without paying any attention as the servants had many friends and acquaintances who came to see them. Suddenly a voice shouted ' Doctor Sahib ' at me. I turned round and found it was Abdul Sebur. I had not recognized him, he looked so thin and miserable. He was as pleased as a small child to be back again and entertained visions of re-entering our service. More and more troops returned, until it looked as though the war really had come to an end.

Towards the end of July, however, fresh trouble broke out which seemed to be more serious than before. On the 3rd August, twenty large motor lorries full of soldiers and ammunition left for the front. The rumour in the bazaar was that the rebels were only half a day's march from Kabul. On the 4th August we were told that the

Europeans living in Darulaman were about to move into the town itself. Many Italians demanded their passports and left the country. Information was given at the Legation as to what facilities there were for protection so that the Colony would not be without advice and protection if a crisis came. At first we decided to remain where we were, but we packed all our superfluous luggage, storing it in a large house in which the greater part of the German Colony were to entrench themselves if necessity arose.

On August 6th matters seemed to grow worse. Rumours were again afloat in the bazaar that the downfall of Kabul was imminent. That evening we were having dinner on the roof when the proprietor came to us and begged us for some petrol. He offered us a very high price, but we had to keep our petrol in case the worst should happen. Numbers of carts and cars in Kabul were commandeered by the Government, until only the Europeans were left with their vehicles. The previous day Gulam had told us that the road leading to Jalalabad was unsafe. A friend of his, who had wanted to go to Peshawar, had been turned back as the caravans in the neighbourhood of Jalalabad were being plundered.

We often used to ask ourselves what would happen to the Europeans in the event of the town being taken and a new Government being formed. Opinions seemed to differ—some were pessimistic and feared the worst, while others saw visions of a new era of peace. As the movement of the rebels was, in fact, indirectly against

Europeans, I was more inclined to the first opinion. It is very doubtful whether anyone will ever be able to discover what the real object of the rebellion was. Without doubt internal politics played an important part, especially as I am almost sure that Russia had some connection with it. Russia has a large Legation in Kabul and works continually against England. They intrigue wherever they can and carry on a vast amount of propaganda work to overthrow British rule in Asia, to create chaos and bring about a large Asiatic upheaval in which they will take a prominent part. For this reason they endeavour to spread their ideas and to bring about a World Revolution. They have left Europe in order to increase their activities in Asia, as, among Europeans, the Russians found little sympathy for their ideals ; they therefore seek to gain the confidence of the Asiatic people.

Afghanistan is for Russia the stepping-stone to India. The inhabitants were discontented with the many changes brought about by the King ; taxes were heavy ; the people were grumbling and the time was ripe for Russia to organize a revolution. When the Afghan Parliament assembled in the summer, the Amir was forced to make several concessions. Amongst others, he was compelled to suppress all the girls' schools in the country. About the beginning of August there was fighting between Hisarak and Gardez where a division of Government troops was surrounded. Soldiers were sent from all parts of the country, and during August and September,

1924, Kabul was a city of many colours. When the first troops arrived, we thought that they were the rebels. I was working that afternoon in my room, when I heard in the distance the noise of shouting. I hurried outside to ask the servants the cause, but they could tell me nothing definite. Jakub only said, ' I will go and see what it is.' After a while he returned with the news that soldiers from the Mohmand tribe had come to assist the Amir, which once again put us at our ease. Later we received a report that the Amir had asked for the assistance of some British aircraft.

During the night of the 8th and 9th August we were awakened by the sound of brisk rifle fire quite near to us. We climbed on to the roof and looked out from a small tower. It was very dark, but when our eyes had become accustomed to the blackness, we discerned the outline of the houses ; there was a light still burning in a house at the foot of the Schere Derwaza. We heard isolated shouting followed by a series of shots coming from different directions, some direct from a place opposite our house, some from the direction where the bridge crosses the river. After an hour, peace reigned once more and we returned to bed. The next morning we discovered that a band of robbers had raided the town, some of whom had been captured.

In the middle of August the situation grew worse. The Jeshm, the feast of Independence, which is celebrated every summer, fell due, and the Government and the Amir returned suddenly from Paghman. On the

20th August a great victory for the Government troops was reported. Rumour had it the heads of fifteen dead Mangals were to be carried through the streets, but nothing happened. A company of Government troops were captured at Ghazni and completely looted of everything. On the 22nd August, on a fine summer's morning, we saw two British aeroplanes which had only taken four hours to fly from Peshawar to Kabul. The aeroplanes were handed over by the English officers and the following day the German airman, Doctor Weiss, who was in the service of the Afghans, flew to the front to make a reconnaissance. He failed, although he had to fly over territory of the Mangals, to discover any of the enemy troops. He flew several times to the rebels' district and was ordered to try and effect a landing in Gárdèz, where the Government troops were prisoners. He previously dropped a bundle of letters over the village in order to inform the troops that they were to discover a suitable landing-place and to mark it by lighting a fire. He flew there again and we thought nothing of it when he did not return the first day ; but after two or three days, and, in fact, a whole week, had passed without our hearing a word from him, we grew anxious. Suddenly one day we heard that Weiss had returned and a few days later he came and told us his story.

He had flown to Gárdez and easily found the landing-place ; he shut off his engine, but noticed then that the place was too small. There was a wide ditch in front of him which, however, he succeeded in crossing, only to

find another narrower ditch across his path into which he fell, breaking his propeller. He was well received by the imprisoned troops, with whom he spent a few days. He then disguised himself as a Mangal, and succeeded, with an Afghan secret service officer, in getting through the unsafe area.

In August a rumour was afloat that the Russians also were desirous of sending aeroplanes. One glorious September morning, at about eleven o'clock, we saw five aeroplanes soaring at a great height like silver spots in the blue sky. In five hours they had flown from the Russian frontier to Kabul, crossing the Hindu Kush mountains, some 15,000 feet high, which was undoubtedly a great achievement. At first we were told that they were to be presented to the Amir by Russia, then that the Afghans were negotiating with the Russians with a view to buying them. In the afternoon there was a wonderful flying display, and thousands of propaganda leaflets written in Persian were dropped over Kabul. The only object of this demonstration was to strengthen the friendship of the Afghans and to annoy England. Later we heard that Russia was only willing to hand over the aeroplanes on condition that the Russian airmen were allowed to remain. How this business was settled I do not know, as I left Afghanistan in the beginning of October.

More and more troops collected in Kabul until a small camp was set up near the town. One morning about 4000 men from Kohistan arrived, many of them mounted. Each tribe carried its own flag, which had already seen

troublous times, as they were old and tattered. Most of the men were clad in torn clothes, but received new suits of clothes on their arrival. Whilst on their way from their homes to the capital they had naturally raided all the villages, and we were of the opinion that these wild races under certain circumstances were even more dangerous than the Mangals themselves, and we were very thankful when they had been dispatched to the front.

At the beginning of October, the Government troops gained a series of successes ; Gárdez was set free, Hisarak was captured, and the rebels were driven back over the Altimur pass to the south. In November there was a parley in Jalalabad between envoys of the Amir and the rebels, but no conclusion was reached, so the fighting continued. At last, towards the end of the year, the Mangal resistance was broken down, and the punishment that the Mangals received was severe, to say the least of it. Some 1515 men were executed, six hundred women were dragged off to Kabul, 3000 houses were burnt and razed to the ground. The Mangal tribe was therefore crippled and for a long time will be unable to rise up again.

All punishments in Afghanistan are very severe. Robbers and thieves have their hands cut off and the stump dipped into boiling oil. The death penalty is carried out either by hanging or else the delinquent is tied in front of a cannon. From our house we could see a small hill which rose behind the *Ark* and it was there that these executions took place, and large crowds would file by in order to see this bloody spectacle. One afternoon there

were a number of executions, and cannon shot after cannon shot followed. A friend of mine, who happened to be riding past the hill, saw accidentally the pieces of a body hurled into the air. It is also quite dangerous to stand near ; in Khandahar a man is said to have been killed on the spot by being struck on the head by an arm of the condemned man. Death by stoning is not yet abolished, for in the previous year several people met their death in this manner. The punishments that the earlier Amirs dealt out were terrible, as a few examples will show.

During our stay in Kabul we hired a stall whose owner was an old Afghan. He had previously been guilty of some offence, but his punishment had been to have his eyes sewn up. How this cruel process was carried out one can easily imagine, but that a surgical needle was not used goes without saying ; later the eyelids were again cut open. He wore a large pair of horn-rimmed, smoked spectacles, at one time as a protection to the eyes and then to hide his disfigured eyes. Thornton tells us another interesting story in his book, *Notes from an Afghan Scrap Book :* A certain baker was one day brought up before the Amir, Abdur Rahman, for selling bread under weight. On that particular day the Amir happened to be in a good frame of mind ; he called the baker an impostor and then said to him, ' No man can make headway in this world unless he is honest—go and work according to the words of the Koran.' A few weeks later the same man was brought up before the King for the same complaint. On this occasion the Amir said, ' You are not only a deceiver

but a rogue. You will pay a fine of 3000 rupees, 3000 annas, 3009 pais (about £210). This punishment will be so severe for you that you will never have to come before me again.' However, a few months later, this same man was again brought up before the Amir, on which occasion he was not in a trifling mood. He said to him, 'Come here, my friend, you are a baker?' 'Yes, sahib,' he answered. 'And your loaves are not the prescribed size?' 'No, sahib.' 'Then there must be too much room in your oven.' And in a passionate fit of temper the Amir shouted, 'Take him away and roast him in his own stove.' This order was at once carried out.

On returning home one night I heard that one of the Italians in the State service had shot an Afghan policeman. For a small offence—some said that he had struck a Post Office official on the ear, others that he had refused to pay money to a *tonga* driver because he considered the charge excessive—he was to be brought up before the Police of the Kotwali—the Chief of Police. Piperno, as the Italian was called, did not wish to be led through the streets like an ordinary prisoner and refused to go. When the police tried to take him there forcibly he tore himself away and locked himself in his room, whereupon they tried to storm the house. In his excitement Piperno fired through the wooden door, which the police were trying to break down with their bayonets, and shot one of them mortally. The police finally broke through the door and dragged him off to the police station. He was then put in a dark cell in solitary confinement, and after lengthy proceedings

was condemned to death. An appeal was made to higher authorities, but they confirmed the sentence.

One morning a servant came to us and asked permission to go and see the Italian stoned to death ; the execution of the sentence was, however, postponed. There was only one way to avoid this, and that was by purchasing the murderer. The dreadful price was about 7000 to 10,000 rupees (£450 to £650), and there was, further, a sum of 15,000 rupees (£1000) to be paid to the relatives of the deceased, in order to save the blood of the Italian. Sometimes when we were returning home late at night after a walk, we could see a dull flickering light coming from the small dark rooms of the prison. At the entrance stood an Afghan policeman dressed in a dark red uniform, with black facings, and black lambskin woollen cap. Excepting the members of the Legation and the Italian doctors no one was allowed to visit the Italian, and at night time a guard used to sleep in the same room with him. I often pictured to myself what a dreadful time the prisoner must have endured—hours, days and weeks of uncertainty, for when I left Kabul in the autumn he was still in prison. We all hoped at that time that he would soon be set free, but his troubles were not over so soon.

After I left Afghanistan I heard nothing more of him until in June I saw in the papers that Piperno had been killed. Later I ascertained the following facts : When eventually a figure had been fixed for the redemption money, the Italian was led to the place of execution where he was made to kneel down and was handed over by the

judge to the friend of the dead man. He drew his long knife and threw it on to the ground, saying, 'An Afghan will not soil his hand with the blood of an heathen.' According to Afghan law, Piperno ought to have been imprisoned for another ten years. One can quite understand that he eventually tried to escape and succeeded by bribing his gaolers; he is said to have reached the frontier, but there he collapsed. Not knowing the language, full of troubles and worries, low in spirit, he gave himself up of his own accord to the Afghan authorities, who again brought him back to prison in Kabul. There he stayed for a few days, after which they took him out quietly and executed him. The Europeans and the Italian Legation only learnt about the execution when it was all over. At the beginning of October, I left Kabul and went through Jalalabad and Peshawar to Delhi, arriving there on October 6th.

CHAPTER XVI

INDIA'S MAGIC BEAUTY

EARLY one morning I arrived in Delhi, the capital of India. A *tonga* took me through the quiet streets, which were still lifeless, to the Hotel Albion which lies hidden away among high trees in the Kudzia garden. The air was cool and fresh with a smell of flowers and newly mown grass. After breakfast I drove with my *boy* to the town. The red of the streets formed a contrast with the dark green mango, banana and fig trees which were being watered. We passed through the famous Kashmir Gate in which the first breach was made during the Mutiny in 1857. In contrast to Kabul and Peshawar, I noticed at once the varied dresses of the Indians. Dark red and gold is the predominant colour among women, who wrap their heads in a *sàri*, or large mantle, whilst their arms and feet are decorated with heavy silver bangles. Their walk is stately, but they are not as beautiful as the women of Afghanistan and Peshawar. The streets presented a typical Indian picture : oxen and *zebu* carts, *tongas*, cars, merchants offering their wares, and, as a contrast, the Europeans in their white tropical suits. All business was being carried on in a quiet and orderly

manner, and I suddenly realized that it was Sunday. In the gardens were apes somersaulting among the branches of the trees, and numerous small, grey, white-striped squirrels. Occasionally I saw naked children lying in the streets, while men sat in groups in the shade of the tall trees, either playing, smoking a *huqqa*, talking or sleeping. Now and then I came across a woman completely veiled, as one finds in Afghanistan.

The main street in Delhi is the Chandni Chauk, which brings back sad memories. One is still shown the place where, in 1738, the Persian King, Nadir Shah, stood, with drawn sword, watching while his soldiers, in eight hours, slaughtered 80,000 Indians and rivers of blood ran through the streets; and again, in 1857, this street played an important rôle. One of the most imposing buildings in Delhi is undoubtedly the Juma Mesjid, the Great Mosque. Something puzzled me when I first saw it, but I could not think what it was. I visited the Mosque on several occasions and again and again I had the same feeling, until at length I realized that it was the difference between the dark red sandstone and the white marble, for these two materials did not harmonize with each other as in Sikandra or Agra. The sudden transition from the massive red sandstone, which forms part of the groundwork of the Mosque, to the soft white of the minarets and cupolas made a strange effect and left one cold. It was as if one set up a fine white renaissance building on a heavy Gothic groundwork of dark stone. In the evening at sunset, when the shadows of night are creeping over the

town, one gets a different impression. The sharp contrasts then vanish ; the Mosque stands there silhouetted—magnificent, imposing, one of the finest buildings imaginable. On the great steps were a seething mass of people ; small booths had been erected and countless merchants sat there by the light of small oil lamps, offering their wares. It was the soul of the Indian Mohammedan speaking to us.

A short walk through the narrow alley ways from the Mosque brought me to the Jain temple. Here I had to remove my shoes and put on soft slippers ; one of the priests then led me up the white marble steps. This temple, which is situated in the midst of houses and alleys, is not large, but I was impressed by its grandeur and stillness. There are white marble pillars, with marble arches and beautifully painted frescoes decorating the walls and ceilings, some of which have unfortunately been destroyed. The sacred room is mystically dark, but I was able, in spite of this, to distinguish the images in bronze and jade, while a Buddhist statue, beautifully carved and decorated, stood on a pedestal in the middle. We moved about very quietly in order not to disturb the peacefulness of the holy place. The priest carried his small daughter on his arm, and explained everything to me in a friendly manner.

In the evenings we always drove through the park. We visited the ridge from which the British fired on the town in 1857, where a simple monument now stands. We also drove to the Flagstaff tower where, in 1857,

women and children sought refuge, and passed the Viceroy's palace and the Secretary's office. Here also perfect stillness reigned, as nearly all Englishmen had retired to the Himalayas during the hot weather. Lonely and solitary, the high white buildings stood dreaming in the shade of the tall trees.

I was impressed at every turn with the might and power of England and of the colonizing powers of this country, for where the Union Jack flies, there is peace and good order. One is astounded when one sees what England has done for India, and I am quite certain that many of us would have different views about India if we spent a longer time there. Just outside the town, in a wide plain on which the merciless sun beats down, are several ruins. The old wall has in many places become completely overgrown and green parrots have found a resting-place here. It was very peaceful and I was able to give rein to my thoughts and dream undisturbed. I pictured the pomp and splendour which existed hundreds and thousands of years ago, when Indraprastha was the seat of the Kings of Pandava.

We drove one day in a southerly direction through wide alleys lined by tamarisks and sugar cane trees. The sky was of a wonderfully deep blue and the sun's rays were so intense that I could scarcely open my eyes. The marble cupolas of the great mosque shone in a most glorious manner in the morning sun. We halted before a large ruin, whose mighty walls, overgrown with creepers, towered above us. They were the remains of the Purana

Killa which, in 1534, was built by the Grand Mogul Humajun. Inside these walls were grass lawns and the overpowering scent of the flowers had enticed many butterflies which with their heavy silken wings flitted from flower to flower. Emerald green parrots hovered about the wall, but there was not a soul to be seen save the old watchman who is stationed there.

We drove on to the grove of Humajun. My *boy* talked the whole time, telling me tales of these old monuments, stories which I had heard many years ago. I am more than pleased that I stayed in India at a time when there were not a great number of foreigners visiting the country. I was, in fact, almost the only one and I was therefore able to enter into the spirit of India undisturbed. What I experienced and saw was the true India, the India of the old songs, about which one reads in books. The more I came to know the country and to understand it, the more I felt that I would like to devote a great part of my life to the study of this magic land. The sepulchre of Humajun is an impressive sight ; in contrast to the great mosque, the red sandstone here harmonizes well with the white marble, as both stones dovetail into one another, the delicate white marble being laid on the red sandstone of the foundation. As I walked through the lofty halls my footsteps echoed back from the walls and roof, even though I was making as little noise as possible in order not to disturb the peace which reigns in these sacred precincts. In the centre, under the high cupolas, stands a plain marble coffin which marks the site beneath

which, in the vaults, lies the sarcophagus of Humajun.

The tomb of Nizum-ud-Dins, a Mohammedan saint, is not far from this building. Plain golden brown walls, a few tall trees, and beggars loitering near by, are all that one sees at the first glance. We again had to wear felt shoes which were put out on one of the steps, from which was a wonderful view of the dazzling white marble. A beautifully moulded white cupola rose in the centre surrounded by white pillars. In one corner of the court-yard are the tombs of three princes, at the head of one of which was a marble tablet on which is written in Persian :—

> Let nought but grass deck my tomb,
> for it is the best covering for poor,
> frail Jehanara, the follower of the
> holy family of Christ and the daughter
> of the Emperor Shah Jehan.

She was the favourite daughter of the Grand Mogul and looked after him till he died. The marble carvings on the heavy doors were very fine works of art. What endless patience and care the artists must have taken with their work. We passed a small pool sunk into the marble floor, climbed the steep steps and drove along the scorching road to Lalkot. It was hot and we drank in the cool air when we came to the shade of the tall trees in the garden, in which is the famous Kutuh-minar. The gardeners here were lying in the shade under the trees, asleep ; the animals, too, seemed to be taking their mid-day nap. The *zebus* stood motionless and the fat, black, water-buffaloes were lying in the small pools by the side of the road, lost in dreams. We strolled about among

the ruins for some time, examining the richly carved, sandstone pillars which originally formed a remarkable Hindu temple, but later were transformed into a mosque. In the courtyard stands the famous iron column which probably dates back to about 400 A.D. I went from ruin to ruin. The heat was unbearable with not a breath of air, and all was absolutely still around us, save for a dragon-fly which hummed quietly near us. The seventy-yard high *Kutuh*—a minaret and a watch-tower, composed of red sandstone and white marble, stood like a sentinel in the centre of the ruins. There was a small summer-house in the midst of the garden in which I ate my lunch. The quiet and peace made me feel extraordinarily happy, and I could have sat there for hours. That afternoon we drove back through Raisina (New Delhi) to Delhi, and in the cool of the evening I went for another short walk in the Kudzia park. We passed a small lake enclosed by palm trees which were silhouetted against the golden evening sky.

The following day I visited the fort. I had already had an opportunity when at the great mosque of admiring the fine red sandstone walls. I passed through the richly carved door into the entrance hall which, at great receptions, serves as a music-salon, and thence out to a beautiful grass courtyard in which were the wonderful, white marble statues of Shah Jehan. The *diwan-i-khas*, or private audience hall, is perhaps one of the finest buildings I have ever seen; the marble carvings are almost incredible. Snow-white columns, with dainty flower

patterns of precious stones which are set into the marble, rise up among the deep green lawns and the red surface of the paths. Through the marble lattice the sun shone into the white hall, the rays dancing on the dazzling white stone. It was in this hall that, in 1738, Nadir Shah and Bahadur, King of India, sat smoking their *huqqas* and drinking Mocha coffee out of small cups. On the following day some 80,000 Indians were massacred by the Persians. History tells us that Bahadur, with tears in his eyes, bowed down before the Persian king and begged for mercy for his unhappy people. The Grand Moguls also used to hold their feasts here. The marble floor was then covered with expensive silk carpets and a magnificent tent was erected in the courtyard. The pomp and splendour at that time must have been indescribable. Here, also the descendants of the great Akbar were tortured in 1788 and the old Emperor Gulam Kadir was blinded. In the garden, somewhat concealed among the green like a hidden jewel, lies the Pearl mosque, composed entirely of white and grey marble with three golden cupolas, which was built in 1659 by Auranzeb. Late at night I took leave of Delhi and went to Jaipur.

I entered Jaipur one heavy tropical night, when the air was laden with the scent of flowers. The avenues of large sugar-cane trees were bathed in the silvery rays of the moon as my old coachman drove me to the Kaiser-i-Hind Hotel. When I awoke, after a short sleep, the sun was pouring over the countryside and a deep blue sky lay over the rosy-

coloured town. The wide streets were lined with sugar-cane trees on which hung shining yellow buds. Camels passed to and fro, holy *zebus* lay on the pavements basking in the sun, goats were gambolling on the iron roofs, and men, women and children in gaily coloured garments made the scene seem like a fairy story. We visited a Hindu temple, in the courtyard of which, under a canopy, stood a large bronze statue of Schiwas Reitstier Nandi. Priests, robed in white, were walking round it, sprinkling the images of the gods with holy water and throwing rice at them. Beneath a large mango tree stood the figure of the Monkey God, Hanuman, around whose neck hung marigolds. In one of the corners was a well, from which a small girl was drawing water ; as I turned to go she saw me and stared at me with terror in her dark black eyes. She could not make up her mind whether to stay or whether to run away. Except for four or five British officials, I was the only European in the town, and therefore aroused great surprise wherever I went.

All houses in Jaipur are of a pale rose colour, and many of them have pictures of Hindu mythology painted on them. The Palace of the Winds, built by Jai Singh II, is very impressive and has more than fifty bay windows. On the open ground-floors are merchants' stalls, while the upper floors are sitting-rooms. The scene became more and more unreal. Hundreds of pigeons were flying about the large squares where they were being fed ; *zebus*, with chains of glass beads round their necks, stood motionless as though in a trance. Green parrots

flew across the roads croaking, and apes were performing acrobatic feats on the cornices of the houses. We went through narrow streets to the goldsmith who showed us the famous enamelled Jaipur gold wares. We sat down on a small verandah, while he fetched a small table, spread a black cloth over it and then ordered a locked case to be brought to him. He opened it very carefully and placed his golden treasures before me. He never spoke a word, but each time, as he took out a new piece, he looked at me as if to say : ' Sahib, is this not wonderful, and can you possibly leave without buying at least one piece ? ' There were gold cups and plates, caskets and boxes, all beautifully decorated with enamel contrasting with the deep Jaipur red. I bought one ring from him, and he thereupon produced a large book in which I had to write that his collection contained the most wonderful jewels that I had ever seen. On my return to the hotel, other merchants were awaiting me who offered me precious stones, carved ivory and medals. I pretended not to see them, but they gave me no peace. ' Only look, sir, do not buy.' These words ring in one's ears all over India.

That afternoon we visited the Palace of the Maharajah. If one has seen the beautiful buildings of Shah Jehan in Delhi, these are rather disappointing. The audience halls are not to be compared with those of Delhi and Agra ; the columns are whitewashed and some of them have been painted with colours. There is little to be seen of the fine pietra-dura work which decorates the buildings of

Shah Jehan. Behind the beautiful gardens lie two lakes. The air was wonderfully fresh and peaceful, and the mountains were clearly reflected in the blue water. An old watchman who acted as guide tried to entice one of the crocodiles which lived in the lake. His call of 'Haberlan' carried across the water and was echoed back again. At last a large crocodile came to the surface, swam slowly towards us and was fed. We drove back through the park as the sun was sinking and the evening sky was turning a golden red. It had become a little cooler, but every leaf was still. We passed along large shaded alleys where the natives were walking, very dignified and proud, especially if a beggar sought alms. On a raised terrace the band of the Maharajah was playing German tunes—Strauss' waltzes. It was like a dream to me to see all the life of India, the tropics, the heavy, overwhelming flower scent, the bizarre, marble buildings, and then to hear a band playing home tunes.

We drove home as dusk was falling ; a few gas lamps had already been lit in the streets. Elephants, gaily caparisoned, with heavy tread were slowly making their way home ; *zebus*, already half asleep, were stepping deliberately between the people, hurrying to and fro and the rocking *gadis*, or two-wheeled carts, while innumerable peacocks shrieked from the roofs their *pao*, *pao*. The fires had already been lit in the huts and half-naked figures were squatted round the flickering flames, preparing the evening meal. A pretty girl dressed in white with black hair was leaning out of a French window in a tall red house

staring at us. I asked my *boy* who she was, and he told me that she was one of the Maharajah's favourite dancing-girls.

I was tired after my day of sightseeing, and sitting in the dining-room at the hotel a feeling of sadness came over me that I should so soon have to leave this glorious country. The waiter was silently moving to and fro. On the walls were pictures of the Maharajah of Jaipur and costly brass and bronze ornaments. The door leading into the garden was open and the night breeze was wafted in in an enticing manner. Suddenly there was the sound of a violin outside—it was European music, played very softly like the sobbing and wailing of an ardent desire. I went out quietly—an old man stopped playing, put his hand to his forehead, and greeted me respectfully, presenting me with two deep red roses. He did not speak a word. I gave him a few silver coins and then went to my room, but I was kept awake for a long time by the shrieking of peacocks. The two roses I pressed carefully in a large book, and I have them to this very day as a remembrance of one of the happiest and most beautiful days of my life.

Deserted and solitary, perched on a crag overlooking a deep lake was a white castle ; eternal silence reigned in the white marble halls. No longer are feasts held there ; queens no longer pace the marble floors since the time when Jai Singh II moved his residence from Ambir to Jaipur. We climbed the wide steps which were almost overgrown with luxurious vegetation, and came to the

castle itself, where an old watchman showed us round the halls. The windows were of filigrée work and looked as though the finest Brussels lace had been stretched over the opening. Creepers and butterflies had been carved out of the marble slabs which decorate the walls, and massive doors of sandal-wood inlaid with ivory and mother-of-pearl hemmed us in. The watchman took me gently by the arm and led me to a small white marble hall, silently pointing to a window. Far below I saw a blue-green lake gleaming like a polished turquoise; small islands rose above the surface of the water, in which temples were reflected. I remained here for some time and found great difficulty in leaving this glorious scene. We then walked on tip-toe, in order not to disturb the peace, through the marble baths, and went up to the fort which crowns the peak. Later we descended to the dead town of Ambir.

We visited temple after temple and went from ruin to ruin. At eleven o'clock the heat was intense, and there was not a soul to be seen anywhere, the town being as still as the grave. A small Hindu temple lay hidden away among the ruins. We climbed the rotting staircase which was overgrown with plants, and came to a courtyard where we noticed the gory marks of the last sacrificial goat, showing that the place was still visited occasionally by human beings. We went up again, and in front of us was a small square stone basin with one or two steps leading down into it. On the last step were two bronze images of gods, covered with pink lotus buds.

I gazed, wrapped in thought, into the water in which were reflected the temple walls. My servant came up to me and whispered, 'Sahib, we must go, it is becoming too hot and the sun has nearly reached its highest point. I pretended, however, not to hear him and remained a little longer. I heard a movement coming from one of the dark corners of the Temple ; there must have been someone there, as I heard the shuffling of footsteps and a racking cough. I asked my *boy* who it could be. A hunched-backed, wizened old woman suddenly appeared out of the darkness and begged for *backsheesh*, or a tip. Was she one of the guardians of the Temple, or was she an outcast, a leper who was seeking refuge in the Temple shrine ? India becomes more and more curious and difficult to understand. We wandered among the ruins for a while, but it became too hot ; in spite of the heat it was difficult to leave. This dead city will continue to lie dreaming at the foot of the white castle, and the flowers will continue to creep higher, covering its walls and towers. I wonder whether I shall ever see Ambir again ?

It was little use thinking of sleep at night as the railway carriage rattled and shook. There had been heavy rains in the Himalayas, in consequence of which the rivers were high and we passed through many flooded areas. Everywhere were broad stretches of water with cranes and other water-birds hovering over them. Trees, shrubs, hedges and houses were all submerged, presenting a pitiful aspect. About nine o'clock we reached Agra and I could

have wished that this had not been my first view of the Taj-Mahal. I had read so much about this tomb and had seen so many photographs of it that my expectations were very high, and I was afraid of being disappointed. It was with a certain feeling of anxiety, therefore, that I approached this white marble monument.

It was quiet in the grounds through which we passed, with no Europeans to disturb the peace and holy atmosphere. I cannot put into words the feeling that came over me when I caught my first glimpse of the Taj. I stood dumbfounded in front of this wonderful building and gazed and gazed, wondering if I were dreaming. I felt that I must actually touch the white marble in order to satisfy myself that it was real. I walked slowly up the steps, hardly daring to tread on them, and quietly passed into the hall beneath the cupola, where, behind a filigree marble grill in an enclosed shrine, is the sarcophagus of Shah Jehan and his wife. Reverently I stood in front of the two tombs in which rest peacefully those two great rulers who gave India her greatest architectural wonders. When one knows the face of the old Queen—the Mumtaz-i-Mahal—and has had an opportunity of seeing reproductions of old miniatures of her, then the white marble conveys a deeper meaning. How great must the Emperor's love for this woman have been for him to have given her such a tomb. The Taj-Mahal is a symbol of love and purity ; more than 20,000 men are said to have worked at it for eighteen years, and its snowy splendour is the same as it was 300 years ago. On the

carved white marble tombs lay fresh oleander buds and laurel leaves, and the old white-bearded Indians, who were on watch there, presented me, as I was leaving, with a bud. The atmosphere here was so subdued, so pronounced, that it is difficult to convey in words.

I visited the fort in the afternoon, from which I had a glorious view of the Taj-Mahal, reflected in the river. Beautiful marble halls with costly pietra-dura work, white as snow, ornamented the deep red foundation. We were shown the balcony where the King and Queen used to play chess, and I looked down into the courtyard in which, on festive occasions, the great elephant fights used to take place. I went through endless marble halls and saw the rooms in which the state banquets were held ; but, even in those times, grief and trouble existed. The eight-sided Jasmine pavilion, also of white marble, inlaid with precious stones, was most attractive. This building was dedicated by the Grand Mogul Jehangir to his beloved wife, the beautiful Nur-Mahal. The Emperor Shah Jehan was imprisoned in this fort by his son, Auranzeb, where he languished for seven years with his favourite daughter, Jehanara Begam, who refused to leave her father. Once he expressed a wish to see again the tomb of his wife—the Taj-Mahal. This request was granted, so one day in January, 1666, accompanied by his daughter, he went up the steps to the Jasmine pavilion. Again his eyes rested for some time on the white marble building which was reflected in the river, and then he turned and went away.

The Pearl Mosque in Agra is as beautiful as the one in Delhi, but larger. At sunset we were still on the terrace of the Palace, and near us some native visitors were gazing at the great river below us which flows past the castle. I wandered up and down the balcony for a long time with my *boy* when suddenly two Indians and a beautiful Indian lady stepped out from one of the white halls. She was clad in a large white shawl which was wrapped round her, leaving one arm and a shoulder free. Her fine oval face was framed by shining hair, and her dark melancholy eyes were lit up with a tender expression. As she ascended the marble steps, the rays of the setting sun caught her, so that she seemed a creature of another world, and I gazed at the slim figure which, with indescribable dignity, walked through the marble halls of the Palace. I noticed that, on the whole, the women of Agra were more beautiful and had more striking features than those of Delhi and Jaipur.

I visited the mausoleum of Itimad-ud-Daulеh the next day, and we drove along by the river, which had recently overflowed its banks. Ruins of houses, uprooted posts and whole wagon loads of mouldy grain which was being thrown from the bridge into the river, made a repulsive smell. The tomb is a unique work of art and is of a totally different style of architecture from the other tombs in India. In the afternoon we went out to Sikandra. The sun beat down mercilessly and the streets were very hot, the dazzling light being almost blinding. We came to small villages hidden away among high

trees, and houses covered with rushes. Most of the inhabitants were sitting on the ground in front of their houses, either talking or meditating. There were several *charpoys*, or native beds, on which some were taking a midday siesta. Slim, beautiful girls and women, carrying large pitchers on their heads, were slowly wandering to a great well. It was also a meeting-place for the village youths, as well as for dogs, goats and *zebus*. As soon as the children saw me, they ran towards me for a tip ; I threw them a copper coin, which promptly resulted in fighting and shouting. Sikandra, the tomb of the great Akbar, was very impressive, with its sandstone buildings inlaid with white marble, for here again the architect has accomplished this with great skill.

How often had I longed in my youth to visit Benares, the Holy City of India, and at last my dream was to come true. We left Agra at night, and, as the train was a few hours late in arriving, I was anxious whether we would catch the connexion at Mogul Serai. The further east we went, the damper became the air, and the richer the vegetation. It was a kind of *Savannah* landscape through which we were travelling, steppes among which were isolated trees, half fields, half woods. Palms were swaying in the wind, and small woody mounds brought a change to the otherwise rather monotonous view. We arrived three hours late that evening in Mogul Serai, a small miserable village, but an important railway junction. The train to Benares had gone, but, fortunately, there was a motor bus which was taking Indian pilgrims to Benares. I was the only

European, and sat next to the driver. Indians of both sexes in the brightest clothes and with tinkling ornaments took their seats in the carriage, with their luggage. It was pitch dark, but our headlights lit up the tall trunks of the mango and fig trees which lined the avenue. When we came to the River Ganges the bridge was closed as a goods train was expected. There were countless *zebu* carts waiting ; the powerful headlights shone brightly, throwing their beams on to the varied picture of carriages and men. At last we were allowed to go on, and soon we caught a glimpse of the lights of the town. We drove through the lighted streets fairly fast. The hotel was outside the town, and as the Indians were to be put down first, I received only a vague impression of life in the Holy City. I reached my hotel and was soon asleep, for the following morning I was to go early to see the sacred river.

The morning hours on the banks of the Ganges are wonderful. It happened to be a Hindu feast day, and the high, baked brick houses were decorated with paper flags, flowers and garlands, and in front of the numerous stalls on the steps were small images of gods. The sky in the east was a golden yellow visible between the high plane trees and fig trees, as I went from the hotel to the park of the Sanskrit High School. There were already numbers of people in the streets, all going to the sacred river, and all forming a gay picture. Women dressed in coloured clothes, their heads wrapped in gold embroidered scarves, and wearing heavy silver chains and bangles on their arms

and ankles, were walking along quietly. There were also pilgrims in many-coloured clothes painted over with the distinctive marks of Shiva and Vishna. There were beggars clad in only a loin cloth, who never seemed to tire of offering their alms bowls to passers-by. Fat Bengalis with sunshades, and now and then a Buddhist priest in yellow garments wandered past, while, through the midst of all, ran small Hindu boys and girls, shrieking and laughing, and gazing at the Europeans with their dark eyes, and an inquisitive expression on their faces. Sacred *zebus* decorated with yellow flowers wandered about or lay down on the pavements. The rays of the rising sun cast their silver light on the surface of the river. My *boy* made a way for me through the crowd, as we climbed the steps of the Dasasa Med Ghat. Indian life was all around me, so vivid that I was unable to take it all in. While I was standing by the side of the river gazing helplessly at the many temples and steps, and trying to find a peaceful spot, my *boy* had fetched a boat, and before I knew what was happening I was comfortably seated on a wicker chair on the deck. As I was rowed along beside the bank, different scenes appeared before me, each one finer than the last. The innumerable spires of temples, the small flags on the gilded towers, all formed a very picturesque scene with the great public steps and palaces, the latter having sunk as the river has washed away underneath.

Thousands and thousands of men, women and children lined the banks, occupying the steps and the sunken

palaces and temples, basking in the sun, bathing, or listening to the Brahmins, who sat under large sunshades to receive monetary offerings. *Fakirs*, or beggars, squatting on flat stones, gazing into the sun, some with long black hair and covered with ashes, formed the usual Brahmin party. A very beautiful girl, clad only in a thin white shawl, rose and went down the steps to the water's edge, leaving her bronze vessel by the side of a sunken temple. She waded into the water up to her shoulders, and raising her hand to her forehead, and gazing towards the sun, she devoutly murmured a prayer. An elderly mother, with grey short-cut hair, was pouring water out of a bronze pitcher over her head and shoulders. We slowly moved from ghat to ghat. The body burners were also at work. At that moment a dead body, wrapped in a white linen cloth, was laid on the funeral pyre, and in a very short time everything was enveloped in flames and smoke. Images of gods decked with flowers, surrounded by hosts of devout pilgrims, sacred cows which wandered by the banks of the river, all added to the beautiful gay scenes. The small Nepalese temple was most picturesque, half hidden beneath the tamarisk and fig trees. We stopped here, went up the steps, while the priest of the temple explained the curious carvings. There was a wonderful view along the banks of the river.

That afternoon we visited the most sacred building of Benares—the Golden Temple. It is situated in the midst of houses, hidden away in a narrow alley, and one can only reach it through narrow, corridor-like passages.

The nearer we came to the heart of the Holy City, the louder were the voices of the people, and a dull sound of drums and gongs. Beggars of both sexes, tattered and leprous, squatted by the way, murmuring and holding out their alms bowls imploring for money. The voices became louder and louder, and the crowd thicker and thicker. A large decorated *zebu* was passing slowly along the narrow street, for which we had to make way. The atmosphere was damp and heavy, and saturated with moisture, while the smell of heat and dead flowers pursued us at every footstep.

One of the pillars supporting the pavilion attracted our attention from the first. More and more bewildering became the picture ; images of gods painted red and decorated with flowers had rice and water thrown over them, while everyone rushed madly to and fro. The drums in the temple were rolling out, broken by the clanging of a high bell. I did not know which way to look, trying to find a place where the eye could gaze peacefully. On one side the food was being cooked in a kitchen for the gods ; while priestesses, dressed in white, decorated the images, and sprayed them. One was lying on the marble floor ; she turned her face, with its sharply cut features and straight black hair, towards me, rose and passed me. For a moment she stared at me with her dreaming, penetrating black eyes, then she passed on in order to spray another image with water. Thus the scene changed every minute, and I stood literally helpless and lost in the midst of it all. I should like to be able to under-

stand these people in order to unveil their mystical ways of thinking, and to know the real meaning of their ritual and practices. In order, however, to appreciate the real meaning of Hinduism involves the study of a lifetime, and it is doubtful whether we Europeans will ever really understand Indian life. We were led into the Holy Presence by a priest, and from a small niche were allowed to watch the bewildering performance which was taking place in the courtyard of the temple. I was overwhelmed by the atmosphere and the continuous chatter ; I unconsciously closed my eyes, unable to believe that it was really happening. Half-naked men pressed round the sacred well of knowledge, from which Brahmins were drawing bowls of water to drink. Everything seemed so fantastic, so unreal, so difficult to understand, that I felt I was watching a play.

We next visited the Temple of Monkeys, which was reflected in a broad lake. Pilgrims were hurrying to and fro ; some were sitting inside the temple, before the dread image of the goddess, Durga, which was decorated with flowers, while others followed us about, begging. The blood of a sacrificial goat still lay on the ground which was being licked by mangy dogs. A priest led us up the steps to a balcony, from which we had a glorious view of the lake. A group of monkeys suddenly appeared, leaping along, but they were quite tame and allowed themselves to be fed. They also were sacred, and woe betide me if I did them any harm !

An hour's journey from Benares lies Sarnath, a memor-

able place, where Buddha, in the large gazelle park, held his first services. A large *stupa*, or tower-like shrine, and the remains of cloisters, spoke to us of the conditions which prevailed here. Now a stillness lies over this venerable spot, and one seldom sees a soul. Near the old *stupa* is the tower of a small Jain temple, and a few Indians of both sexes in brilliant coloured clothes were going in and out. We returned to Benares as the sun was sinking in the horizon. As I turned to go, I looked back at the place where Buddha used to live and saw a Buddhist priest in his yellow garments, who had taken up his residence there ; he formed a contrast with the green of his small garden. The deep peace, which lies over this country, gave me the feeling that it had never known anything different.

It grew darker and darker, and as we approached Benares, we saw small oil lamps burning by the sides of the streets, and the roots of the high trees were lit up. Even the small shrines by the wayside were illuminated by candles, and through the foliage of the trees shone the dull, flickering light of the stars. There were lamps also on the roofs and in the windows of the houses. It was indeed a Hindu festival. I sat late into the night on the terrace of the hotel, and it seemed to me as though the smell of flowers increased hourly, and became heavier. Large moths fluttered round the lamps, and the crickets gave out a continuous monotonous humming.

We left for Calcutta on one of the most sultry nights that I had ever experienced. The moisture in the air

increased hourly, and I was thankful when at last I could leave the town. I did not see much of the city as our final preparations never left me any peace, and the damp heavy air made me indifferent to everything. In spite of the electric fans in the room, it was almost unbearable. I visited the large Jain temple, which, in so far as elaborate carving, coloured marble halls and curious gardens are concerned, could hardly be excelled. One evening I was driven through the Botanical Gardens, which are beautiful. There were many people in the streets, and again I had a picture of coloured India. Now the last preparations for our return journey were being made. We had still to buy some important articles, and the heavy luggage had to be sent off to the Kidderpore Dock.

CHAPTER XVII

HOMEWARD BOUND

On the morning of November 1st, 1924, the *Merkara* sailed from Calcutta, a steam launch taking us to the ship. The sky was cloudy and it was sultry, damp and oppressive as though we were going to have a thunderstorm. Slowly we moved out of the harbour, leaving the town behind us. The banks of the river were in sight all the time, and occasionally we went so close that we could actually see the reed-covered huts of the natives, like lake-dwellings among the high palms. We sailed out across the blue-green sea, and the coast slowly vanished from our sight, and not till two days later did we sight land again at Madras. The weather was dreadful. For two days I went ashore with a friend and we took a carriage along the Strand Promenade, the Morena, to the town. It was very oppressive here and one felt the coming storm. We had lunch in the Garden Hotel, but ate little and were so limp that we could scarcely put the fork to our mouths. Already that morning when driving along the coast, we had seen clouds gathering up over the sea. On the shore were a troop of half naked dark natives running to a boat which was trying to get to shore through the breakers,

and I was reminded of a picture that I had first seen as a schoolboy in an illustrated book called *Robinson Crusoe*. The snow-white shores shone in the bright sunshine, and the foam glittered like a thousand diamonds. Late in the afternoon the storm broke ; the rain descended in torrents, the wind howled and the temperature fell considerably. The thick cable, by which our ship was attached, was torn in two so that we had to lie up at anchor. The waves became higher and higher, and the ship tossed considerably, the small pilot boat rocking like a cockle shell in the midst of the tremendous waves. It was with great difficulty that we managed to tie the ship's cable to the buoy which was bobbing about in the waves. In order to carry this out, an Indian from our boat had to jump on to the buoy ; a piece of work which he succeeded in doing remarkably well. When, on the following day, the storm abated, we continued our journey to Ceylon.

I shall never forget the morning when the hills of this earthly paradise—Ceylon—first appeared on the horizon. The sea was of a blue-black colour with a touch of green, and the hills rose in the background in shades of soft lilac, seeming almost like a *Fata Morgana*. White clouds clung to the tall blue hills of the island on which the Adam's Peak was specially noticeable, gleaming in the sunshine. The coco-nut and palm trees came down to the water's edge, their lofty tops waving in the breeze, and even from a distance we could see the entrance into the harbour of Colombo. Small tugs sailed past us and we recognized through our field glasses several ships

which were steering for the harbour or were anchored out at sea. One large three-mast boat was being towed in by a small tug.

I was allowed to stay on this island only for a few hours, but they were hours that I shall never forget. I can still see the avenues with their high palms, and I often think when it is quiet at night that I can hear the roaring of the waves by Mount Lavinia. The red streets, the many different shades of green in the woods, the blue sea and the bright sky made such an impression on me that the picture continually springs up before my eyes. Peace and quiet rule here. The English bungalows, in their beautiful gardens, are like small castles, and the huts of the natives cluster beneath the high palm trees. By the sides of the streets sit jugglers and snake charmers, who make their cobras dance to the tune of a flute. Colombo has also many beautiful houses and shops built in European style. A lively business goes on in the streets, and now and again one sees rickshaws, but most often motor cars are used.

The next morning very early, as the first rays of the sun were pouring over the island, we sailed out of the harbour. Slowly palm tree plantations and houses vanished until we could only see the pale shadow of the hills across the blue sea. For a long time I stood looking towards the East where Ceylon's peaks were sinking below the horizon, and I bade farewell to India, which was hard to do. India had given me many happy days, weeks and even months, and now I was returning to Europe. As I write these lines I have been home for six months, and am

longing to return. The peace of the Asiatic mountains and the magic of India call to me, and the desire to return is so strong in me that I am quietly making new plans.

A large butterfly accompanied the ship for two days and seemed like a last message from India. We continued our way across the Indian Ocean, the sea being as calm as a lake and of a beautiful bright blue. We often saw flying fish, and we never would have believed that they could have flown over such vast stretches of water. We made friends with a few Englishmen and killed time by playing all kinds of games. It was wonderful to lie in a deck chair either reading or gazing out over the blue sea. I have often been surprised at myself, for I would sit there for hours without doing anything, only thinking out new plans for the future. The vast Indian Ocean had the same effect on me as the camp fires round which, too, I could sit for hours staring into the flickering flames.

For me the days went only too quickly, for they were days of peace and rest in the real sense of the word. When the sun sank below the horizon and the sky was lit up in red and golden colours, I often took out my paint box and tried to make a water-colour sketch. But it was not easy, for the colours changed so quickly—violet, orange and bright rose appearing, and were blended into each other. The skies sometimes were pale green colour, the clouds forming a curious picture. As I stood on the deck gazing at the bright clouds, I could almost see a second green-blue sea in the golden islands, and I dreamed of

eaks, seas, bays and plains. Then it seemed as though he sun was sinking there and slowly the dark shadows would creep across, until only the highest peaks veiled in eep rose were visible. It was like a greeting from a different world, and only when I looked again at the ever-moving sea did I realize that it was all a dream. In the evening we used again to lie in deck chairs, the men in smoking jackets, the ladies in evening dress, drinking small whiskies and sodas or ginger-ale, talking and listening to music, and we frequently did not go to bed till twelve o'clock. One evening there were phosphoric lights on the sea. I went with an officer and a lady to the bows of the ship, and, leaning over the rail, saw great blue flashes suddenly run along the side of the ship, while the phosphorescent light played on the tossing foam and waves. The nights were wonderful, with the silver light of the moon slowly filtering through the blue-black clouds. The sea then seemed quite black, and only two shining white beams danced where the sea and the sky met.

On our right lay the island of Socotra, deserted like a dead island—after which Aden came into sight. I can still see the high, bare rocks rising before me, on which there is not a speck of green to be seen, while below were the houses, large barracks, and lighthouses. When we anchored, a large number of small boats came alongside, Arab merchants offering their wares to us and shrieking out aloud. They are not allowed to come on board, so they throw a rope to the deck, to which a basket

is fastened, and into these baskets they put the goods that they are offering for sale, such as ostrich feathers, cigarettes, fans, and necklaces. Some one seizes the rope and pulls the basket up on deck, examines the articles, and if there is something he wants, takes it out and puts the money for it in the basket, which is again let down. I went ashore with a family in small boats, as the steamer cannot get alongside the quay. We visited various shops, made small purchases, and walked along the seashore. It was already dark when we had finished making our purchases, as our ship had only arrived at Aden late that afternoon. The sunset was indescribably beautiful the reflection streaming across the sea, like liquid gold, and the rocky walls rising up like silhouettes. When we left the quayside it was already dark ; the small shining lights in the shops, and the illuminated ships in the harbour made a wonderful picture.

We then continued on through the Red Sea, the heat being unbearable only for one day, when one could scarcely move even in a deck chair, and the only refreshing thing was the ice-cold lemon squash. Often we caught a glimpse of the Arabian coast and the distant hills like a faint smudge on the horizon, and we searched for any signs of villages or harbours through our field glasses. Once we came across a ship with brown sails in the Red Sea, manned by Arabs who were out fishing. I unwillingly thought of the pirate ships in which the Arabs, in earlier times, made the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea unsafe. Nearer and nearer came the coast, and soon

Suez was reached. We entered the canal at night, and when I came up on deck the following morning, the land lay on our right and left. Slowly we sailed through the green-blue water, occasionally catching sight of camel caravans on the banks, while small tumble-down villages and palms broke the monotony of the desert waste. Ismalia, with its beautiful palms, gave us another picture of Indian magic. We noticed that it became cooler as Europe grew closer and closer, and in Port Said we put on our coats. The sky was grey and the water black. Again we coaled, two large sloops lying alongside our ship, joined by large planks up which the coal-heavers, working like ants, dragged the sacks. It was now dreary and cold, and no longer formed a pleasant picture ; the change from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean was dreadful, one missed so much the sun and the bright light, the warmth and the dark blue of the sea.

Europe's first greeting was as though it wished to warn us that once again we were approaching a land of work and worry, where one has to fight for one's livelihood. The sky became darker, and we could scarcely remain on deck owing to the cold. The happy games stopped, white tropical clothes were packed away, and even the ship's officers put on their dark blue uniforms, which made them look as though they were in mourning. We passed Crete in the afternoon, its high peaks covered with snow. If only the sun had come out once again, pouring its warm light to drive away our sad feelings !

When, on the morning of November 29th, we entered the Straits of Messina, the sky was a beautiful blue, and large white clouds hovered like icebergs in the blue sea air. There were white towns all along the seashore, and small villages nestled among the rocks. We had a poor view of Etna, as its summit was shrouded in clouds, but we saw the houses of Messina, basking in the sunshine. The sea was a clear blue-green, only broken by the small white steamers which ply between the mainland and Sicily. We later passed Stromboli, which was throwing up its clouds of smoke. Directly at the foot of the volcano are small houses in the midst of green gardens. The volcanic soil is very fertile, and for this reason the inhabitants, in spite of the almost imminent danger, settle down there. Late that evening we came to Corsica and Sardinia, their proud, rocky pinnacles rising out of the dark sea, the revolving red and white lights guiding the ship. That afternoon the captain had received word that a storm was imminent, and while we were sitting in the smoking-room that night, talking and exchanging stories, we suddenly heard the howling of the wind as the storm broke. Flashes of lightning and rolls of thunder followed one another. I put on my rainproof coat, and went to have a look outside. The lightning seemed to jump from cloud to cloud, and lit up the angry sea. Thunderstorms have always made a deep impression on me, and even as a child I used to stand at the window, gazing at the quivering flashes and the movements of the clouds. I have often been in bad thunderstorms in the hills, but none

impressed me so much as those between Corsica and Marseilles.

The following morning we sailed into Marseilles—we were once again in Europe. The great harbour echoed with its varying sounds, and beggars making music on the quayside. One small girl was playing a violin, and another the harmonium. The troubles and worries of Europe could be plainly seen on the faces of these children with their tattered clothes. Never have I thought so much of India as on the first day that I set foot again in Europe. It was hard, indeed, for me to leave the ship. That evening we went down with a Swiss friend of mine to the harbour. The sky was cloudy, and it was cold and misty. Once again we went on to the deck of the ship, and looked out at the big harbour, over the sea of masts and chimneys. A large crane was working, unloading countless bales of tea from the hold. We then drove back to the town, and at twelve o'clock that night I left Marseilles. France showed me a sad face—the rain streaming down against the window panes, while a mist lay over the fields. A few yellow dried leaves still clung to the trees, telling the pitiful tale of the storm. On the second night I passed the German frontier and was once again in my own country, and greeted the old well-known towns.

GLOSSARY OF NATIVE TERMS

Backsheesh, gratuity.
Bod, wind.
But, idols.
Caravanserai, halting-place for animals.
Charpoy, native bed.
Cheka, Soviet Political Police.
Chergosh, hammer.
Chota hazri, early morning tea.
Chunuk, cold.
Fakir, beggar.
Gadis, two-wheeled cart.
Gah, place.
Gecko, insect.
Gil, clay.
Hakim, Afghan official.
Huqqa, Indian waterpipe.
Jeshm, Afghan feast.
Kale, fort.
Kebab, roast mutton.
Kelim, rug.
Khabadar, beware.
Kitajes, small Chinaman.

Kushbarek, cloth.
Kutel, pass.
Mangal, oval brazier.
Mast, sour milk.
Mirza, writer.
Mudir, secretary.
Muezzin, Mohammedan crier.
Mullah, Mohammedan priest.
Munshi, teacher.
Pilau, savoury rice.
Pritshli, we have arrived.
Robat, rest house.
Samovar, an urn for making tea.
Sandalis, low table placed over a brazier.
Sari, large mantle.
Seng, field.
Siah, black.
Stupa, shrine.
Swinja, sucking pig.
Tagao, ravine.
Teng, valley.
Tonga, native cart.
Wazir, Afghan official.

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